SERIOUS REFLECTIONS ON TIME, AND ETERNITY.

With some other Subjects, Moral and Divine.

To which is prefix'd an Introduction concerning the first Day of the Year, how observed by the *Jews*, and may best be employed by a serious Christian.

By *JOHN SHOWER.*

The second Edition Corrected, and very much Enlarged.

LONDON:

Printed for *Joseph Watts*, at the *Angel* in St. *Pauls* Church-yard, 1689.

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TO THE READER.

THE visible Decay of Piety, and Evangelical Holiness, is a common subject of Complaint: and hardly ever more justly than now, *with respect to the Generality of Churches, and particular Christians. All serious and considering Persons must needs reckon themselves obliged on that account both to* Mourn *and* Fear. *The causes of serious Mourning are too many, and too notorious, to be unobserved by those, who*

have any Knowledge of the present State of the Christian Religion *in* Europe, *even among the most* Reformed. *The general* unacquaintedness *with the Mysteries of the* Gospel; *the Reproach of the solemn Assemblies by the* Corruption *of its Doctrines and Worship, and the dishonour cast upon its most sacred Institutions; the late terrible Desolations of the Temple and Sanctuary, and grievous sufferings of our* Brethren *in many parts of the World; the shameful* Apostacy *of so many Thousands from the Doctrine and Worship of the Gospel, and other considerations of this kind, which might*

be

be named, do carry with them a loud call to Humiliation and Mourning.

But the Practical *Degeneracy of Professing Christians unto* Worldliness, Profaneſs, *and* Sensuality, *doth not only afford matter of* Lamentation *for the present, but too much ground to* Fear, *that* the bitterness of Death is not past; *that God's Anger is not turned away, or his Controversie ended with the Protestant Churches. And after we have known so many* Thousands *to renounce and abjure their Religion in an Hour of Temptation, and see so many more (yea the far greatest part,) in a preparedness to Revolt, on*

the like or leſſer Trials, by reaſon of their vicious Lives, *(becauſe they receive not the Truth in the Love of it,) what can we reaſonably expect, but further Tokens of Divine Diſpleaſure?*

And how little *of any encouraging Proſpect is there, by the ſerious* Reformation *of Perſons, Families, and Churches to turn away his Wrath? Where are there any* Symptoms *of the* Recovery *of the* Power of Godlineſs, *from whence in our Age there is ſo undeniable a Declenſion? (and acknowledged by all Parties that there is ſo.) How little is to be ſeen of any ſuch thing, among thoſe*

who

who are moſt Forward *and* Zealous *in eſpouſing the Reformed Intereſt? even ſuch as would be thought of all others to be moſt concerned for its Preſervation, and have ſuffered not a little for it?*

The diſtreſſed caſe of our Brethren cannot but move our Bowels of Compaſſion, when we read or hear from time to time the Relation of the barbarous Proceedings of their Perſecutors. But the ſenſual wicked Lives of profeſſedly Reformed Chriſtians, *is certainly a more* dreadful *object to be conſidered, and ought ſo to be regarded by us, as the* Conſequences *of it are much more*

to be feared, *than of the fiercest* Persecution *by open and avowed Enemies. For the* Church of Christ *never lost either* Truth *or* Holiness *that way; it hath rather been a considerable* outward Means, *for the preservation and encrease of* Both. *Though this cannot be said, but the direct* Contrary, *concerning* Protestants *persecuting one another for* lesser Differences.

The sad Effects of it have been seen and felt to that degree, in weakning the common truly Christian Intetest *among us, that now, if ever, there is a louder Call than ordinary to* Forbearance, *and*

For-

Forgiveneſs, *and* Unity of Affection; *that our Diviſions, with a* revengeful, perſecuting Spirit, *may not prove our Ruin.*

And whatever Expectations we may and ought to have, from the unfulfilled Prophecies, *of God's* rebuilding Sion, *in the latter days, and deſtroying her Enemies; (which we have no reaſon to queſtion but he will moſt glorioufly effect, and ought daily to pray that he would haſten it, for his Names ſake:) yet can we never hope to ſee any thing conſiderable of that kind, in our Time, without a great* Repentance *and* Reformation, *and the* more Plenti-

ful pouring out of the H. Spirit for the healing of the Nations. *I therefore wish that the confident expectations of a* speedy *deliverance of the Church, may not divert us from the* present Duty *we are called to, as the proper appointed* Means, *to which God hath directed us for that end.*

Before the destruction of Jerusalem *by* Titus, *what was it that did hinder the* Jews *from hearkning to the Voice of God and Man for their Preservation; but this Presumption, that at that time their* Messiah *would come and save 'em? And that* Day of the Lord *which is expected, (wherein he will*

plead

plead the Controversie of Zion *against* Babylon,) *how Glorious soever it may be in the* Issue, *may be, 'tis likely it will be such, as shall disappoint our vain and foolish* Hopes *concerning it. God will* throughly *purge his Temple, and punish the Men that* are at Ease, *and* setled on their Lees, *and tread down the* Outer-court *of false Professors. Therefore all ranks and degrees of Men should be awakened to serious Repentance.*

And are there any hopeful Beginnings *of such a Thing, within view? Is there any thing on Foot to be observed, like such a retrieving of* Gos-

pel

pel Holiness *in the* Hearts *and* Lives *of Men?* Doth not the Name *and* Thing *grow more and more into Contempt every day? and who can tell how far it may proceed, to procure* Judgment *upon any particular Place or* Country, *that is guilty of so general, and provoking a Defection?*

It concerns us therefore, every one *to look to himself; to* Repent, *and* do our first Works, *and make our Peace with God, that we may be found within the* small number *of those, who shall be thought worthy to escape the almost* Epidemical *infection, and* to stand before the Son of Man. *On which*

which Account, any thing that is likely to awaken Men to Consideration of the great acknowledged Principles of Religion *cannot be unseasonable. Yea, in such a case the* meaneſt, *and weakeſt Endeavours may be of* ſome *uſe. The* Subjects *of the following* Reflections *are moſt of them of that kind, neceſſary to be attended to by all ſorts of Perſons; and ſo cannot be too often preſt, though in different Manners.*

The uſefulneſs of the ſubject Matter, *and the ſmalneſs of the* Bulk, *are two things which are wont to recommend a Book to moſt Readers. For which reaſon, I may Hope, this will*

be

be read by several, who suffer much better, (because bigger,) books to lye by them neglected. Some may possibly give it the reading, as a New-years gift. And whoever shall be so far perswaded by it as to set apart some Time in the beginning of the Year, for Self-examination, Confession of sin, Repentance, Thanksgiving, and solemn renewal of his Covenant with God, (which several of these Reflections may not only excite to, but are intended to direct and assist him in,) I am perswaded he will thank me for putting him in mind (at least,) of so seasonable an Exercise. The greatest

part

part of these Meditations were begun on a New-years day, *tho some* others *are thought fit to be inserted, as tending to promote the same design. But knowing how much* easier *it is to stir up* other Mens Devotion, *than to command and keep alive* my own; *'tis desired that the most devout Thoughts contained in these Papers, may be looked upon as what the Author aims at, and would perswade to, rather than what he hath already attained: as what he knows he* ought to be and do, *and doth seriously endeavour rather than what* he is, *and* hath been: *heartily lamenting wherein he hath been Faulty,*

ty, or defective in such duties, *as these, and the like Reflections, do oblige to, and enforce upon* All, *who shall read them, and therefore much more upon himself.*

That they were Penn'd at several times, *and in occasional Retirements for Spiritual Exercises, will, with the difference of the Subjects, be a sufficient excuse, that some are* larger *and others* shorter, *and that the* Style *is in some places more* neglected *than in others. If I may hereby render* any Service *to the Souls of Men, if any secure Sinner, any Self deceiving Hypocrite, or backsliding Christian be hereby awakened, or any serious Believer's* Devotion

tion *be quickned and advanced, I hope God will accept it. To his* Bleſſing *I humbly recommend it; for thoſe Ends.*

THE

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THE

THE Introduction.

From what Time the Jews *reckoned the* Beginning *of their* Year: *of the difference between their Sacred and Civil Account. The* Feaſt of Trumpets *on the* firſt day *of the* Year, *'its Inſtitution, Nature, and Deſign: the Traditions and Cuſtoms of the* Jews *reſpecting that Day.*

UPon the deliverance of the Jews out of *Ægypt*, the firſt month which began with the new Moon next to the vernal Equinox, was to be accounted (a) *the beginning of Months*; it anſwers to the latter end of our *March*, and the Beginning of *April*; and is ſometimes called *Niſan*, and ſometimes *Abib*. It was ordinarily after

(a) *Exod.* 12. 1.

that Deliverance, reckon'd the Firſt month of the year, in their *Sacred* or Eccleſiaſtical *Account*. Therefore the *Paſſover* kept in this month, is ſaid to be obſerved in the *firſt* month: and the Feaſt of *Purim*, which was kept in our *February*, is ſaid to be in the *laſt* month, that is, of the Sacred year. A Period ſo remarkable and extraordinary, as that was to the *Jews*, deſerved very well to be particularly remembred and taken notice of: and might juſtly be accounted the *Firſt*, or chiefeſt *of their months*. And by comparing *Exod.* 12. 41. with *Gal.* 3. 17. it may be concluded that *Abraham* received the *Promiſe*, on the fifteenth day of this month: and 'tis computed that about the ſame time of the year *Iſaac* was born; and the *Tabernacle* afterwards erected in the wilderneſs.

As the *Redemption* of *Iſrael*, from their *Bondage* in *Ægypt*, was but a *Type* of a more glorious one be the *Meſſiah*, he was pleaſed to ſuffer *Death* in this(*b*) Month. According to this Computation, the Month *Tiſri*, (which began with the firſt new Moon next to the *Autumnal* Equinox)

(*b*) *John.* 18. 28.

is

is often called the *Seventh Month:* but was not so accounted before the Deliverance of *Israel* out of *Ægypt.* As to Civil and Political Affairs, it was for the most part reckoned the First Month of the year. on this Account, this Month (*c*) *tisri* (which answers to part of our *September*, and part of *October*) on the Fifteenth day of the Month was the Feast of *Tabernacles*, when the (*d*) Fruits of the Earth were gather'd in, and is said to be in the *End* of the year. Much hath been said by many Learned Men for the date of the Worlds Creation, and the Begining of the year, from the *Vernal* Equinox or the *Spring*; aud the *Ægyptians* are alledged as keeping the great Festival of *Aries*, or of the New Year, when the Sun enters into *Aries*. But however uncertain that be, and how difficult to determine it, yet in *Autum* is Computed by the *Jews*, the Creation of the World, the Birth of the first Patriarchs, the Reparation of the Tables of the Law, the Dedication of the Tem-

(*c*) *Heidegeri Hist. Patriarch. Tom.* 1, *diss.* 12 §. 22. *de Anno Patriarcharum* (*d*) Exod. 23. 15, 16. *See Ger. I. Vossii Isag. Chronol dissert.* 2 *Scaliger de Emend. Temp. Lydiat. de variis Annorum formis. Selden de Anno Civili vet. Jud.* Joel 2. 23. 1 Kings 8, 2 *Lightfoot Horæ. in Math. Cap.* 2. *v.* 1.

ple, the Three Great Solemn Feasts of the Beginning of the Year, and other Remarkable Passages. As many Religious assemblies, and Solemn Feasts were appointed to the *Jews* in this Month *Tisri*, as in all the year besides.

That the *Birth* and *Baptism* of our Blessed Saviour *Jesus Christ* should be at this time of the *Feast of Tabernacles*, is as Considerable, as that his *Passion* should be about the time of the Jewish *Passover*. He was Sacrificed for us at that time, when by God's appointment the *Pascal Lamb* was to be offer'd as his Type: And at the *Feast of Tabernacles* he came to pitch his Tent in our nature, to (*e*) tabernacle in our Flesh, and dwell among us. The Scepter was so far gone from Judah that the *Jews* were compell'd by a foreign Power, instead of observing the feast of the Tabernacles at Jerusalem, every one to repair to his own City to be taxed, as the Emperour *Augustus* had commanded, (and 'tis not very likely he would appoint that in the depth of Winter, the time of our Christmas) and now was the Season for *Shilo* to appear.

The *Eighty first Psalm*, composed by Asaph for the first day of this Month, or *the feast*

(*e*) John. 1. 14.

of

of (f) *Trumpets*, is ſuppoſed to have been in Remembrance of that Deliverance out of *Ægypt:* the Sounding of Trumpets being a token of Liberty. This Feaſt of Trumpets on the *Firſt Day* of the *New Year*, according to their Civil Account, is thus commanded, *Levit.* 23. 24. *Numb.* 29. 1. & 10. *cap* 10. that it ſhould be, *a Sabbath, and a Memorial of blowing of Trumpets, an holy Convocation*, &c. Some think it is called *a Memorial of Trumpets* to preſerve the memory of *Iſaac*'s *Deliverance*, by the ſubſtitution of a Ram to be ſacrificed in his ſtead; to this purpoſe it may be alledged that it is ſometimes called by the Jews, the *Binding of Iſaac*: which they ſuppoſe to have been in the ſame day of the year. By others termed *Feſtum Cornu*, the Feaſt of the Horn. But it is more probable, that this name was not given, with any reſpect to *Iſaac*, but on the account of that *kind of Trumpets*, which were then ſounded, viz. ſuch as were made of ſheeps or *rams horns*. Others think it to have been Appointed as a grateful remembrance of former *victories* which God had afforded them. Particularly *that* at *Jerico*,

(f) Dr. *Hammond* in *loc. Godeau univer. Hiſt. de l Egliſe. Tom.* 4. *c.* 1. §. 6. *Hoſpinian. de Feſt. Judaic.*

where was the first opposition they met with in their passage to *Canaan*, and the walls of the City fell down at the Sound of such Horn-Trumpets; *Josh.*6. 13, 20. But the most likely account of it is this: That it was intended to solemnize the *Beginning of the New Year*, to mind them of the Beginning of the World, and to excite their thankfulness for the Fruits and Blessings, and Benefits of the year preceeding. The extraordinary Blowing of Trumpets by the Priests at this time, (in all their Cities, as well as at *Jerusalem*, where two Silver * Trumpets were also use' at the Temple, as well as these of He,n, and the *Levites* sung the 81 *Psalm*) might serve both to stir up the People to bless God for the Favours of the Year past, acknowledging his Goodness in preserving them to the beginning of another; and withal excite them to pray for his Protection and Blessing, for the New Year, on which they now entred.

Maimonides, the famous Jewish Rabbin, thinks the sounding of Trumpets at this time was designed to signifie some such Exhortation as this (*a*), *Arise, O ye sleep-*

* *Lightfoot's* Temple Service, chap. 16 §. 5.

(a) *Canones de Pœnitent. cap.* 3. *can.* 6.

ers

ers, out of your ſleep, and you that ſlumber awake out of your ſlumbering. Search your works, and turn by Repentance. Remember your Creator, you that have forgotten the Truth, and have exchanged it for the Vanities of the World; and have all your Lives wandred after Vanity, which will not profit or deliver you. Conſider your Souls, conſider your Ways, and Works, and let every one of you forſake his evil way, and his thoughts that are not good.

Some have imagined a typical Repreſentation of the *two Covenants* in this Feaſt. The Old Covenant figured by the Year paſſed; and the Covenant of Grace, or the Goſpel ſtate by the New Year then begun; and that by the ſound of Trumpets was prefigured the future Preaching of the Goſpel, according to that of the Apoſtle, *Their ſound went forth unto all the Earth, and their words unto the end of the World*; and ſo the Feaſt of Trumpets is abrogated by the Preaching of the Goſpel, if that were typically ſignified by it. The publication of the Goſpel is *the joyful ſound*, Pſalm 89. 15. And Miniſters are to liſt up their Voice like a *Trumpet*, Iſaiah 58. 1. the diſcharge of their Office as Watchmen, is expreſt by *ſetting the Trumpet to their mouth*, Hoſ. 8. 1. Ezek. 33. When the Jews ſhall be converted to the Faith

of Christ, it is said, *in that day the great Trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come, who were ready to perish,* Isaiah 27. *ult.* 'Twas the Office of the *Priests* to sound these Trumpets, *Numb.* 10.8. The publick Dispensation of the Gospel is committed to *Ministers*, set apart for that Work, as the Sons of *Aaron* for theirs. We read but of *two* Trumpets at first, for *Eleazar* and *Ithamar*, the two Sons of *Aaron*, Numb. 3. 4. But *David* added many musical Instruments: And in *Solomon*'s time, at the dedication of the Temple, we read of one hundred and twenty Priests who sounded with Trumpets, 2 *Tim.* 5. 12. Without supposing any Type here, in a strict and proper sense; we may yet farther consider the Parallel, and observe, how the Joy and Gratitude of these Trumpets did excite, is exceeded by that greater rejoycing, promised and foretold by the Prophets, when the glad tidings of the Gospel of Salvation by the *Messiah* should be publisht to the World, *Isa.* 54. 1. *Luk.* 2. 11. *Gal.* 4. 27. which hath been in *part* accomplisht: And will be more compleat, in that Kingdom of *Peace* and *Purity*, which Christ will establish upon Earth, toward the end of the World: And shall be finally perfected

perfected at the end of Time; when Days and Years, and Time (thus measured) shall be no more. When the Messiah our *B. Saviour*, having finished his mediatory undertaking, as to what concerns *Earth*, shall come again from *Heaven*, with *the Trump of God*, to raise the *Dead*, and summon all the World to their final Judgment. Then *shall he deliver up the Kingdom to his Father*: And the Faithful enter into *the Joy of their Lord*, and be *for ever* with him.

There is a Tradition among the Jews mentioned by *Maimonides* (*b*), that on the *first day* of the *New Year*, God enters into *Judgment* for the Sins of the *Year* and *Life past*. That every ones Faults are weighed against his good Works. He that is found *Righteous* is sealed unto Life: And he that is found *Wicked* is sealed unto *Death*.

And 'tis a general Custom that hath obtained among the *Jews*, for the ten first days of the *New Year*, to rise out of their Beds in the Night, and to continue in their *Synagogues* praying and worshipping until break of day. The superstitious and ridiculous *Ceremonies of the* (*c*) *modern*

(*b*) *Canones de Pœnit. ch.* 3. *can.* 5. (*c*) *Vid. Ceremones & Cout. parmi les Iuifs d' aujourdhuy, par.* 2. *c.* 53

Jews on this Day, I shall not repeat. However vain and groundless, superstitious, and absurd many of their Customs, and Practises are on this Day: Yet this blind *Devotion* of the *Jews* may justly shame and condemn the *Christians* of our Age; Who commonly spend the *Beginnings* of every Year worse than any other parts of them; and instead of any solemn Retirement for Prayer and Meditation, which might assist them to *number their Days*, and prepare for *Eternity*; (instead, I say, of such seasonable Exercises) how do vain and hurtful Sports and Pastimes, or trifling and unedifying mirth, and fruitless conversations consume the greatest part of the Days, (and *Nights* too) of the *beginning of the Year!* And thus when the *first fruits* of the Year are offered up to Sin and Vanity, 'tis no wonder if the following parts of it are imployed to no better purpose; without any due concern for the Soul, and an Everlasting State.

To endeavour some *Remedy* to those disorders, and give some *Assistance* to them who desire seriously to make Religion their Principal Business, is the end of publishing these *Reflections*. I most heartily beseech the *God* of all Grace to influence

ence by his Holy Spirit, the Conſcience of every Reader, that ſome ſuch effect may be attained. Having found the Practice recommended, to be of ſome uſe to my ſelf, and my own Heart warmed in compoſing the *ſubſtance* of theſe Papers, (tho' without any Intention at that Time of expoſing them to the World) 'tis not unreaſonable to hope, That what hath been beneficial to one, may be helpful to another. It cannot certainly be unadviſeable, or improper to *Begin* the *Year* with *God*, with *whom* we ſhould begin *every Day*. 'Tis decorous and becoming, to *Dedicate* our ſelves to Him, in a more ſolemn manner than ordinary, at *ſuch* a Time: Thankfully to acknowledge *the Favours* and *Bleſſings* we have particularly received the *Year Paſt*: And to recollect the *Sins* we have been guilty of: to aggravate them with Humility, *Contrition*, and deep Remorſe: to renew our *Covenant* with God: to repeat and fortifie our *Reſolutions* of living better; imploring his *Grace* to aſſiſt us in it: to reflect ſeriouſly on the Mutability, Frailty and Brevity of our *preſent Life*: to conſider the Swiftneſs, Uncertainty, Irrecoverableneſs, and conſequently Value of our *Time*: to look forward to a *Bleſſed*, or *Miſerable Eternity*,

nity, one of which we must share in; and to confirm our Faith in the *Certainty* thereof, and consider our *near Approach* to such an unchangeable State: to think what *Improvement* we should make at the *Death* of others, especially of *Relations*, and *Friends*, who have *lately* been called home: To make the *Supposition* in good earnest, that we may follow them *this Year*, and dye before *another* New Years-Day; to *imprint* such a *Thought* on our Hearts, and the *Inferences* that may naturally be deduced from it: to *beg of God*, to inable us to *Redeem our Time*, and discharge the Duty of our particular places; and *prepare* us for all the *Events* of the *following Year*; and so effectually *Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our Hearts unto true Wisdom*; left we be surprized by an *Unexpected Death* before the period of another Year. And *lastly*, to *pray* for our *Relations* and *Friends*, *Families* and *Neighbours*, and our *Enemies* too; and plead with God on the behalf of *Sion*, and the afflicted and deformed state of the *Protestant Churches*. To some of these, and the like Purposes, I hope what is here offered, may be subservient; if considered with *Seriousness* and *Application*, after humble Invocation of the *Blessing of God*, and

and the aids of his Spirit; compoſing our Minds and Thoughts, as in his moſt awful and holy Preſence.

I have only this to requeſt: That if any ſhall find any real *Beneſit* in this kind; he would ſo far requite my charitable *Aſſiſtance* of him, that when his Heart is moſt ſerious, his Spirit moſt compoſed and devout, and his Affections moſt vigorous and lively, he would not forget, to put up one Prayer to Heaven for me, for Greater Holineſs and Abilities to Honour God, and perſevering Faithfulneſs to his Truth and Intereſt, what ever Temptations to deſert it may be imployed by the *World*, the *Fleſh* and the *Devil*: the three *Great Enemies* of thine and my Salvation.

DEVOUT

DEVOUT

DEVOUT REFLECTIONS ON TIME AND ETERNITY,

This World and the Next.

I.

Of the changeable State, *and short* Duration *of* Earthly *Things*; *especially of* Man, *how little is is* considered *and* believed: *how necessary it should be.*

WHen I consider that yesterday was the conclusion of the last year, and that I now am entred on another; 'tis seasonable to reflect on the *mutable* Condition, and *short* Duration of all Thing in this World, which are measured by *Time*. That as they have their *Beginning*, so they have their *End*: And that

that the diſtance, or ſpace of Time between the *one* and the *other* is very little. Let me not then, *O my Soul!* Rejoyce and pleaſe my ſelf too much in *New* Injoyments, remembring a Change may be at hand, and the End is certain.

Many who were *Rich* and Flouriſhing the *laſt* year, may be reduced to *Poverty* and deep diſtreſs, before the end of *this*: who are now in a capacity to relieve others, within a few months, or a ſhorter ſpace, may be objects of other Mens charity. *The thing which hath been, is that which may be*; and that which hath been ſeen in one year, may happen in another; ſo eaſily, ſo quickly may a *Change* be made! Riches may unexpectedly change their Owners, and borrow wings of a thouſand Accidents, wherewith to fly to Heaven for a new Diſpoſal. (*a*) *They therefore who poſſeſs, ſhould be as if they poſſeſſed not; for the Faſhion of this world paſſeth away.* Innumerable caſualties may effect that change, which no human Art or Skill can poſſibly foreſee or hinder. Afflictive unexpected evils attend us every where: we cannot promiſe our

(*a*) 1 *Cor.* 7. 29.

ſelves

ſelves Tranquility for a *Day*, much leſs *one Year* to come. They lay in wait for us on every ſide, enter at every crevice, and commonly overtake us, when we are leaſt apprehenſive of their approach. * *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of Trouble:* He cometh up as *a flower*, and is cut down: fleeth as a *ſhadow* and continueth not. What then are Riches, Beauty, Strength, and Honor, the accidents of this *Subſtance*, which is it ſelf but a *Shadow*! How falſe is the Hope of Man, and how frail is all his glory! One day can make an end of all his Riches and Honours. And yet what ſolicitude, care and labour, to *get* what we deſire of theſe things (though often we do not need 'em) and then to *keep* what we have gotten, and then to *encreaſe* it, and then to *defend* it, and at laſt to *enjoy* it, and in a moment it is ſnatcht from us, or we from it. His *Life* is but a *vapour*, on which they all depend; then how much leſs are they? To how ſpeedy an alteration are they ſubject! What numberleſs Inſtances of this doth *one years experience* furniſh! What ſadning

* *Job* 9. 25.

Diſap-

Diſappointments and unexpected Calamities have befallen many ſince this Day Twelve-month! and multitudes who are now at eaſe, and think their mountains too ſtrong to be removed, ſhall meet with ſharper Tryals before the end of this year. *Alas!* how few conſider or believe it, till they find it ſo? All men ſhould count upon trouble and diſappointment, ſuffering and ſorrow in this world; and he that hath the leaſt ſhare, is reckoned the moſt proſperous man; and yet he knows not how ſoon his Portion may be doubled. We reckon our *Joys* by the abſence of ſome degrees of *Sorrow* and Calamity that others meet with; and before the end of this year, our condition may be as diſconſolate as theirs. *O my Soul!* though I know this to be true; though I cannot, I dare not deny it; yet how difficult is it to conquer the Love of this World, and of this Body, to that degree I ought! to undervalue the intereſt of a ſhort, a mutable, uncertain and troubleſom *Life*, in compariſon of the permanent poſſeſſion of an everlaſting Good! Though I know that what is earthly and temporal muſt needs be thus changeable and fading; and that it is as true of *Man* himſelf

ſelf, as of any thing under the Sun; yet how do I forget *what Man is!* not only mutable in his *State*, his *Body*, and his *Life*, but in his *Mind* too, ſo as to love and hate, to chuſe and neglect, to delight in, and abhor, ſuch things at one time as he did not before. He doth not paſs the ſame *Judgment*, nor retain the ſame *Affections* at one time as at another. How do I live, as if all this were as certainly falſe, as it is unqueſtionably true? admire, love, fear, truſt in *Man*, as if he were the direct *Contrary* to what he *is*, and ſeek for *Immortality* upon Earth, and act as if I were aſſured of it, and were not lyable to any *Change*; though I acknowledge and know the contrary. Though the *laſt years Experience*, and the obſervation of every day doth convince me of it; though all Hiſtory, and all the Records of the Grave atteſt it; though all Mankind in every Age have found it ſo; though it be a manifeſt notorious Truth, legible in the various changes and calamities, but eſpecially in the duſt and aſhes of all who have lived before us (our Graves being often made of our Predeceſſors Duſt, and the Earth we bury in having once been living) yet how little is it believed, how ſeldom

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conſidered! The Confirmation of it which *one year* gives us, hath little influence on our hearts or lives, with reſpect to the *next*. We ought therefore to *accuſtom* our ſelves to theſe thoughts, before ſuch *changes* happen, to which our *Final change* ſhall e'er long ſucceed. They will be leſs efficacious, if never admitted till our minds are oppreſt and feebled by the weight of Affliction. We ſhall *then* want that vigour of *Reaſon* which ſhould co-operate with the Remedy; and which, if uſed before-hand, would help to ſupport and ſtay our minds under all ſubſequent Revolutions. For thoſe Conſiderations may be able to fix and ſtay our minds *under* Changes, that may not be ſufficient to recover and raiſe our Spirits *after* they are dejected and fallen.

Of

II.

Of the Change *in Mens* Inclinations, Opinions, *and* Actions *which one year ſhews; How obſervable it is in* Others: *how much more diſcernible in* our Selves. Honour *and* Reputation, *&c. how uncertainly preſerved, and how eaſily blaſted.*

WHat a diſcovery doth *one* Year make of the *Mutability* of *Man*, not only of his outward Condition, but of the Man *himſelf*, his Temper, his Practiſe, his Inclinations, his Averſions, *&c.* He abideth not at *one ſtay*; every breath of wind turns him to *another* ſhape. We deſpiſe *to day*, that which we admired *yeſterday*; and to morrow hate the object of our preſent love. We begin *Friendſhips*, and cancel them on ſlight occaſions; And a mortal Enmity often ſucceeds to a tender Affection: The very Perſons who are in one year our darling *Friends*, and poſſibly deſerved to be ſo, may yet be open *Enemies* the next, and ſeek our Ruine. *Lord! what is Man?* How deceitful and mutable the Heart of Man! We know not what other Men are, or will prove to be till a trial; and

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we are equally ignorant concerning *our ſelves* till an hour of Temptation. How patiently do we think we could bear *Afflictions* till we feel them! how partial and miſtaken a Judgment do we make of our Wiſdom and Strength in reference to the future! we counſel others to *Submiſſion* and *Reſignation* in the moſt difficult trials, and wonder they complain ſo loud; when we our ſelves deſpond and ſink under *half* their Burthen; and ſend up our more impatient murmurs to Heaven, when God thinks fit to prove us by a lighter Stroke. We *cenſure* and condemn *Others*, who are in an higher Station, and are called to more difficult work than we; when by a little Advancement, and the like Temptations, we diſcover that we are *as bad* as they. They who were reputed Humble, Temperate and Religious, when they have been *Exalted* higher, become proud ſenſual, and ungodly. Had ſome been told *a Twelve month* ſince, what *now* they are, and ſpeak, and act, they would have made *Hazael*'s Anſwer, *Am I a Dog, that I ſhould do this?* A change in the publick Affairs of the *State*, and by that means of particular *Intereſts*, or ſome Alteration of our own private Circumſtances (calling us to *new Duties*, and

expoſing

expoſing us to *new Temptations*) diſcovers us more to our ſelves, and to other Men, than was expected, and proves us to be very *different* from what we appeared to be. Such a change, for Inſtance, as from *Poverty* to *Riches*, from *Sickneſs* to *Health*, from *Obſcurity* to *Honour*, from *Privacy* to a *Publick charge*, &c. or on the contrary. Men cannot bear the *weight* of Temporal Happineſs, but Riches and Honours make us to be Other Men, than before we ſeemed to be. How weak a thing is Man! that cannot carry his own *Wiſhes*, without falling under them: That cannot proſper in his deſigns, without being changed in the Temper of his mind, upon every ſucceſs. So true is it that *Man in Honour is like the Beaſt that periſheth*; And changed ordinarily for the worſe, as to ſerious Religion. May we not fear, that ſome, who a year ſince dared not live *a day* in the neglect of Cloſet and Family Devotion, do now omit it, for many *Days* and *Weeks* together? And that ſome, who once were careful to improve the *whole Sabbath* to religious purpoſes, now place the whole of their Religion in attending the publick Worſhip, and think it enough, not for *that Day* only, but for

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the *whole Week*. Under the Afflicting hand of God, or ſome Apprehenſions of an approaching change, or ſenſe of guilt upon great Tranſgreſſions, the Convictions of Sin are lively, *Conſcience* is ſenſible and awake, *Affections* warm, *Reſolutions* ſtrong, *&c.* But alas! how ſoon doth the caſe alter! our Spirits cool, our Zeal abates, our good Purpoſes untwiſt and die, and come to nothing. By degrees we return to *Folly*, and boldly venture on *that Sin*, we lately trembled at. Through the want of continued ſmart *Afflictions*, or of a ſerious awaking *Miniſtry*, and friendly faithful *Admonition*; or through the Temptations of vain *Company*, and the remaining power of *fleſhly Luſts*. So that we falſifie our moſt ſacred *Promiſes* and *Reſolutions*, violate our holy *Vows*, cancel the bonds of God upon us, ſuffer the *Devil* to re-enter, and prevail again, to take poſſeſſion of our hearts, and yield our ſelves an eaſie prey to his *Temptations*, till our latter end be worſe than our Beginning. Oh what a change doth one year let us ſee! in *Perſons* as well as things! in *our ſelves* as well as other Men! And as it is with *Man* himſelf, ſo with every thing that he Values himſelf upon, or for which he

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is esteemed by others; and even his *Estrem* and *Reputation* is also changeable and uncertain. Not to Instance in Riches, but in what is nobler, *Learning*, and the Improvements of the Mind by study; how soon may the violence of a *Disease* disturb or stupifie the Brain to that degree, as shall reduce the greatest *Scholar* to the pitied Condition of a *Fool* or *Bedlam*? And where is his Reputation and Renown, in such a Case? But much less than that will blast the fairest *Reputation*, with the far greatest part of the world: It may be lost by unwary mistakes, by false reports, by envy and Malice, by the subtle hatred of *Enemies*, or by the weakness and credulity of *Friends*, (who will listen to every Backbiters story) or by one or two *Indiscretions* of the man himself; and no man can be certain to secure his Reputation whilst he lives; much less after he is dead. Who can content *all* men, however he live? And who is well spoken of by *all* when he is dead? Who is so esteemed, that some do not despise him? The wisest Conduct cannot hinder but *some* will judge hardly and a miss.

How vain and faulty is an Ambition to be talkt of after we are dead, which will

be but by very *few*, and that very *differently*, and but for *a little while*. *There is no Remembrance of former things, neither ſhall there be of things to come, with thoſe that ſhall come after*, Eccleſ. 1. 11. For how little a while do the proudeſt Monuments laſt, that are ſet over the rotten Fleſh and Bones of many, to preſerve their Memory? God hath promis'd, 'tis true, that *the Righteous ſhall be had in everlaſting Remembranc*; but it muſt be underſtood ſo far only as the frame and ſtate of this World, and the Revolutions and Viciſſitudes of Time will permit. But what Good can it do us, farther than the Intereſt of Gods Glory, and the Good of others is concerned in it? The Bleſſed will not need it, and the Damned have no advantage by it. And no Endeavours can be certain of Succeſs: For People will talk of us as they *pleaſe*; and their Opinions very often change from one Extream to the other. But he who hath the loudeſt Fame, ſhall only be talkt of *a little longer* than his Neighbors; and that by a few dying Men, that muſt *themſelves* be ere long forgotten. And how ſmall a part of the inhabited World, is acquainted ſo much as with the *Name* of the greateſt men in *Europe?*

And

And how different and *contrary* are mens *Opinions* and Diſcourſes of them, where they are known and talkt of? And how many holy excellent Perſons are buried in *Oblivion*, or miſ-repreſented as unworthy to live on Earth, whoſe Names will be found in the Book of Life? Our *Life* is yet as mutable and uncertain as any of theirs. The Time is haſtning when we ſhall be *too old* to Live, but at any time we are *old enough* to Die. Our *Breath* is in our Noſtrils, and though there be room enough for it to go out, we have no aſſurance that we ſhall have power to draw it in again.

III.

Of the Uncertainty *of Living to the Period of* another Year. *The* Vanity *of this* Life: *The* Swiftneſs *of* Time, *and how to be improved.*

I Now begin another Year: But what Aſſurance have I to out-live it? I cannot ſay how ſoon my Sovereign Judge may call me hence, and ſummon me to appear before his Righteous Bar. O let me not defer my neceſſary Preparation for *Death*, which may be nearer than I imagine! Let me mind the Great things *firſt*, which are of abſolute neceſſity to be done, ſome time or other before I dye. This periſhing *Body* which I have pampered and indulged, at the expence of ſo much Coſt and Time, may be putrifying in a ſilent Grave, before half this Year be paſt. Lord! bleſs this thought, to awaken my diligent endeavours to ſecure the Bleſſedneſs of *Eternity*! to mortifie the Deſire of Great things for my ſelf, in future Years, by the conſidered poſſibility of dying before the end of this! Let me look into the Graves of others,

others, and consider that this may quickly happen to me, and must ere long be my own case: Let me think what *this Body* will shortly be, when it hath been six or eight days separated from my Soul; how vile? how loathsome? that I may despise the Beauty, and be dead to the Pleasures of the Body, which so easily, so suddenly, so strangely may be changed. For no *Glass* is more brittle, no *Bubble* more vanishing, no *Ice* more dissolving, no *Flower* more fading, no *Shadow* less substantial, no *Sleep* or *Dream* more deceiving, no *Sound* more transient, nothing more vain and more uncertain than *Life*, on which all other things in this World depend. *My days are as nothing*, saith *Job*, though they lasted above two Ages. There is hardly any thing very *Frail* and *Fading*, Mutable and Uncertain, but the Spirit of God in Scripture sets forth the *Vanity* of *Life* by; as if he would teach us by it, from the Light of every perishing Object, which our Eyes behold, to reflect on our own Mortality. We sleep every *Night*, in the outer Chambers of Death: And in some Diseases *Sleep*, which is the *image* and Picture of *Death*, is taken away, to give place to the *Original*, and make

way for death. And every year, every week, every day are haſtening to our final *Change*; which may overtake us ere we are aware. Every day we loſe ſome part of our Lives; in our very *growth* from Infancy to Manhood, our Life decreaſes and grows leſs. Every Pulſe and Breath doth tell us we are haſtening to the End of Time, and calls upon us to diſpatch our Work. Every *Word* we ſpeak, is formed of that Breath whereby we live; and we may not live to pronounce another Sentence, but the Lamp of Life may be extinguiſht and blown out by a ſudden Blaſt. Every thing we do, carries away ſome Sands of our little Glaſs of Time; and how little may remain? Or how ſoon may the *Glaſs* be broke? Our Souls are in our Bodies, as a little *Air* incloſed in a thin *Bubble*; how eaſily is that broken, and where are we? How many who are now alive, in health and vigour, who deliberate on their Meat and Drink, and are curious of Air and Exerciſe, to maintain themſelves in Health, and pleaſe themſelves with the Dream of Years to come, ſhall never ſee another *New-years-day*? It may be not another month, or week or morrow? Many have

have promiſed themſelves great things on the morrow, but dyed before Night: Let me not ſay, I ſhall not dye *this Day*, when I may *this Hour*; and 'tis but *once* for all, there is no amending an ill Death, by another Tryal. "When I lye down "to ſleep, I hope to riſe ſtronger and "freſher, and fitter for work; but I "know withal, I may riſe no more. And "may not my Name be on the Roll of "thoſe who ſhall *next* be called, at leaſt "ſome time *this Year*? Let me not then "neglect or fooliſhly delay my *Principal* "*Buſineſs*, to provide againſt a *Change*, "which is inevitable, but the time of it "altogether doubtful. Ought not my firſt "and chiefeſt Care be imployed to make "my Peace with *God*, (He *alone* can be "my Happineſs; to his final Judgment "I am haſtening: His Favour *alone* can "give me ſupport and Joy in a dying "Hour: To his Mercy I muſt truſt, when "I leave this World, and can have no ad-"vantage more by any thing in it:) "that he may mercifully receive my Soul "at Death and be my *Everlaſting* Portion? Do I know my Life is thus vain "and tranſient, and ſhall I not ſeriouſly "improve it to ſuch a Purpoſe? Shall "theſe Thoughts leave no *Impreſſion* up-

" on me? Do I breath continually in this " Element of *Vanity*, and yet forget " where I am, and remain insensible " of so near a Change? Shall these " Thoughts pass away as a vanishing " Cloud, and distil no softening drops " on my Soul? Shall the Image of Death, " which meets me every where, be only " like an appearing Ghost or Phantasm, " that startles and scares a little, but is " presently gone, and no more consider- " ed? O! let me now remember to make " *God* my Friend, and secure an interest in " his Eternal Mercy, while the Day lasts; " yea, while my Reason and Understand- " ing are free, and not disturbed and " clouded by Fear and Pain, and the Dis- " orders of the Body, as commonly they " are in *Sickness*, if God should vouch- " safe me that Warning, which yet I " may not promise my self to have, for I " may be cut off by a Sudden Stroke, " before the end of *this Year*, I now " begin.

And how great and necessary a Work have I to do in so short and so uncertain a Portion of Time? endless joy or Misery will be the consequence of spending this present Time. My ignorant Soul must be instructed, my carnal Heart

Heart renewed, many falſe Opinions muſt be unlearnt, and ſinful Cuſtomes changed, and powerful Luſts mortified, and ſtrong Temptations overcome, and many Graces to be obtained, exerciſed, ſtrengthned and preſerved, to pleaſe and ſerve, and gratifie an Holy Omnipreſent God, my Soveraign; and expreſs the Thankfulneſs of my Heart and Life to Chriſt my Saviour; and is all this nothing? Is not all my little haſty *Time* too little for ſuch a *Work*? to prepare for a ſafe and comfortable Death in order to a bleſſed Eternity?

IV.

Of the ſeeming Difference, *between ſo many Years* Paſt, *and the ſame number of Years* to come.

WHen I look back on the preceeding Years of my Life, how eaſily can I graſp them all at once? they are even *as Yeſterday when 'tis paſt*. But ſo many Years to come hath ſomething great and vaſt, which fills my Thoughts, and affects my Mind, after another manner. Such is the difference between *paſt* Injoyments, and the Expectation of *future*. Let me ſuppoſe the ſame term and duration of Years, and yet how different are my Apprehenſions of what is paſt, and of what is yet to come! Things paſt by a remembrance of ſome remarkable Paſſages, when they happened, ſeem to be preſent with me: But not knowing what may happen in the ſame number of Years to come, I have nothing whereon to fix my Thoughts. Or the Reaſon of this Difference may rather be, that Men in this degenerate & neceſſitous State (with unſatisfied Deſires reaching after Happineſs, and ſenſible nothing preſent can afford it, and knowing by Experience that nothing paſt could have done

done it, (are eagerly desirous of Felicity; and because we know not but what is to come may procure it, we hope it will; which makes the Time seem long by reason of our Expectation and Desire of *Good*. Whereas the foresight of *Evil*, and the Expectation of *that*, some years hence, makes the Time rather seem short and near at hand: So many years to come, in the expectation and desire of Good, are long and tedious; such *Hope deferred makes the Heart sick*; even tho' 'tis of that sort as must needs fail our expectations. Prepare me, Lord! for what thine unerring Counsel shall please to order, as to the remainder of my time on Earth; and suffer me not to count upon a great number of *Years* to come, since *this*, for ought I know, may be my last; neither let me expect Rest and Happiness in this World, which nothing Temporal can afford. This is not the state or season, wherein, by any promise of God, I am encouraged to hope it. And if *fifty or threescore years* to come, be thought so great a matter, and really is so, as to our stay on earth; Oh what apprehensions ought I to admit concerning an endless, *everlasting State!* especially being as certain of the *latter*, after Death,

Death, as I am uncertain about the *former*; whether ſo many Years be yet to come before my Death. Let me not hereafter be ſo prepoſterous in any Solicitude, Cares and Fears, as to be anxious for to Morrow, and yet be thoughtleſs of Eternity.

V.

The little *Portion of our Time on Earth conſidered, by a* Computation *of the Life of Man, from the number of* Years *and* Hours.

THink, *O my Soul!* how ſhort is that Life at longeſt, made up of Years and Months, and Days; ſuch little parts, and yet in number few. Well therefore may it be expreſt, as I find in Holy Writ by *Years of number*, That is, ſuch as may ſoon be numbred. When a *few Years* are come, ſaith *Job* (*d*), (or *the Years of number*, as in the Original) I ſhall go the way, whence I ſhall not return. By *the years of an Hireling*, which were not above *three*, Iſ. 16. 14. We uſually compute *Threeſcore and ten Years*, to the Life of Man: Let me ſuppoſe *four ſcore*. The Bed with moſt imploys one half; and hardly

(*d*) 16. 22, 12. Ezek. 16. Iſa. 10. 19.

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one in thirty doth reach the Age of *Seventy Years*. And (*e*) they who live to ſuch an Age, do yet complain how ſoon 'tis done. Ignorant Child-hood and heedleſs Youth, and infirm old Age, may be ſuppoſed to take up a third part of that Time. In either of them very little of the great Ends of Life are anſwered. We ordinarily begin to reckon our Lives from our *Birth*; whereas for a good while after we know not whether we are alive or no, but are beholding to others to make the account for us. When we firſt come to the ſteady uſe of *Reaſon*, or what we call the Years of Diſcretion; how few are there but from the Prejudices of Education, from the Corruption of Human Nature, from the want of Experience, from the Infection of bad Company, how few, I ſay, but ſpend their *younger Years* in thoſe things, which afterwards they are aſhamed of, when Experience hath taught them the Wiſdom of Men? How great a part of our remaining Time is taken up in the Neceſſities of Nature about Food and Rayment, and in lawful Cares, to ſupport the Body? and how much more than needs, in pampering, dreſſing and

(*e*) Winter-Evening Conference, Conf. 1.

adorning

adorning it? Out of the *small remainder*, how much is imployed in the concerns of a Family and near Relations, in particular Callings, in neceſſary Civil Buſineſs, and in getting, keeping or improving an Eſtate? Beſides all the Time that is ſpent in Recreations, Viſits, unprofitable Diſcourſe, impertinent Thoughts, Journeys, Sickneſs, and innumerable other Occaſions, ſome allowable, ſome unavoidable, and many needleſs? After this, how little Time remains wherein to cultivate and improve our Minds, by Languages, Arts and Sciences, or the knowledg of a Trade, *&c.* How *little* then after all, may we ſay, is left for the matters of *Religion*? for Devotion to God, and ſerious preparation for another World? *Alas!* how ſmall a number of Years make up the Life of Man! and how ſmall a Portion of that is imployed about the Principal Buſineſs, for which we were born, and for which we live? We divide Time into Paſt, Preſent and Future: But the *Paſt* is not now ours; the *Future* is not *yet*, and the *Preſent now* is paſt, ere the ſound be pronounced. And yet this is *all* the Time allotted us, wherein to ſecure the Bleſſedneſs of Eternity. How many Hours more of our little Time might be improved

proved than commonly are by the Beſt? In every Year there are 8775 Hours: If we allow the greateſt half for Sleep and neceſſary attendance on the Body, and take but 4000 Hours for our Work and Buſineſs of conſequence: How poor an acconut can moſt Men give of all theſe 4000 Hours in every Year? not one hour in *ſeven*, not one in *ten*, is ordinarily devoted to God, and the purpoſes of Religion. Should it not affect us, ſeriouſly to conſider this? eſpecially if we remember, at what an *uncertainty* we are, how ſmall a number of Days and Hours do yet remain. *This* Year, *this* Month, *this* Week, *this* Day or Hour may be my *laſt*. What an unſuſpected Accident or a ſuddain Diſeaſe may do, I know not: But this I know, that there is ſcarce *any thing* that hath not killed ſome Body; an Hair, a Feather, a Vapour, a Breath hath done it, and when the Apoſtle *James* asks the Queſtion, *What is your Life?* He anſwers, *It is even a Vapour, that appeareth a little while, and then vaniſheth away.*

VI.

Of the Redemption of Time, *how precious and valuable a* Treaſure *it is, and will be thought to be, when'tis too late.*

IS the Life of Man ſo ſhort and fleeting, our Days on Earth ſo few, and ſo uncertain, how careful ſhould I be to manage every Hour; endeavouring to match the *Swiftneſs* of *Time* by my celerity and diligence to improve it? I can have no Buſineſs of greater or of equal Moment to mind, than to ſecure the Happineſs of my Soul in another World. And ſhall I laviſh my Time, and loſe my Pains about things unneceſſary? What will all other Buſineſs ſignifie in the end, if this be neglected? Is there any Intereſt more weighty, that calleth me from ſuch work? Is there any thing elſe that ſo well deſerves my Time? That may be put into the Scales, or weighed in a balance againſt this? Shall *Eternity*, which comprehends all Time, have the leaſt ſhare of my Time allotted for its concernments? How little a part of my Time hath been hitherto employed in ſuch work! How reaſonable, how ne-

neceſſary is it to redeem the little Inch of Time that yet remains, but haſtens to a Period? For as there is no Covenant to be made with Death, ſo no Agreement for the Arreſt and Stay of Time; it keeps its pace whether I redeem and uſe it well or not. The greateſt part of our Life is deſignedly employed to avoid Death; we eat and drink, and ſleep, and labour, and reſt, that we may not die; and yet even by theſe we haſten to Death. Every Breath, every Pulſe, every Word leaves one leſs of the number which God hath appointed me, and carries away ſome Sands of the Glaſs of Time; and yet how little care is taken to employ it well? We ſeldom value it, till we can no longer uſe it to any advantage; and though we know it can neither be retarded in its motion, or recalled when paſt, yet of nothing are we more prodigal. Yea, how many complain of it as a Burden, and know not what to do with their Time, are exceedingly at a loſs wherein to employ it, what to do to be rid of it? But alas! how near is that Change, when they ſhall think nothing too dear to purchaſe ſome few Grains of that Sand, which now ſeem too many, while they are paſſing through

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their Hour-glass? How sad will be the review of our lost and ill-spent Time? How different an Opinion of its Value shall we have on a sick-Bed, or when our Time and Hope is gone? How many Weeks, and Days, and Hours, *O my Soul*, have I trifled away in Sloth and Idleness, in foolish Mirth, and hurtful Company, in vain Thoughts and impertinent Discourse, in excess of Sleep, and needless Pastimes, Feastings, inordinate Care to adorn the Body, or gratifie the sensual Appetite? All that which is past is irrecoverable; and the little remainder flies apace. How quickly will it be gone? How soon, how suddenly may an unexpected Stroke of Death conclude it? And yet this is all the opportunity I shall ever have to make my Peace with God, and prepare for the everlasting World. Did we consider it as we ought, we should not foolishly throw away so much of it in Trifles and things impertinent, or what is worse: How much more might we redeem than commonly we do? To how much better purpose might we husband it? How much more work might we do, were we never idle, or did not loyter? We might walk far, did we not often stand still, or go out of our way.

way. We ſee it plainly by the great and excellent Effects of ſome few mens Induſtry in every Age. Art hath found mean to ſet Spies and Watches as it were on the *Sun*, that he cannot look out, but they take hold of his *Shadow*, and force it to tell how far he is gone that day; and yet while we are curious in making Time give a juſt account of it ſelf to us, how little do we conſider the account of our Time which we muſt ſhortly give to God? Oh that ſuch a Thought might effectually perſuade me to redeem it! that I may not tarry till the end of Time to know the worth of it! Let me not undervalue it, while tis given me to be uſed, that I may not eternally regret my Folly, when Time ſhall be no more.

God calls me to Diligence and Labour; the *Work* he calls me to is excellent, and the *Reward* glorious; to know, and love, and ſerve, and obey him, in order to eternal Life; and ſhall I yet be idle? Is this the Uſe and End of all my Time? And do I know it and believe it? Do I indeed believe it, and yet delay and loyter, and waſte my precious Hours in vanity? Am I going into *Eternity*, and entring into another World, and know that I muſt be in *Heaven* or *Hell* for ever,

ever, and have I Time to throw away? Am I fit to die, and to appear before my Judge, or am I not? Am I made meet for Heaven by pardoning Mercy, and sanctifying Grace? Have I the Earnest of the Spirit to witness and assure me of it? Is my Interest in the Promise of Eternal Life as firm, and my Evidence of it as clear as it may be made? Am I not conscious to my self, that much of this necessary Work is yet to be done? And shall such an unprepared Soul as mine be careless and indifferent how I spend my Time?

VII. *Of*

VII.

Of the Ordinances *of Heaven, Day and Night, Summer and Winter, Seed Time and Harveſt; their order and ſucceſſion eſtabliſht by God, is the effect of Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs. What they may teach us.*

WHen I conſider the beginning of another Year, I can hardly avoid reflecting of its ſeveral parts, Summer and Winter, Spring and Fall, Day and Night, and their alternate Turns. This calls me to obſerve and admire his Eternal Power and Godhead, Wiſdom and Truth who is the Great Author of this admirable variety; Who hath fixed the Earth whith his Foot, and hanged it on nothing, and ſetled the Luminaries of Heaven for Excellent Ends: *The Sun to Rule by day, and the Moon by Night*, thereby to diſtinguiſh Times and Seaſons, to ſeperate Day and Night, Winter and Summer, and conſult the convenience of Man and Beaſt by their due ſucceſſion. *The Day is thine, the Night alſo is thine, thou makeſt Summer and Winter*: How wonderful is their

their Order, Beauty and constant course, that when the Sun withdraws, and the shadows of the Evening cover the Earth with darkness, to conclude the *Day*; the Moon and Stars supply the place of the absent Sun during the *Night*: and that tho they differ in length, yet gradually lessen till they are both equal at the years end, and have made the same Circuit. How excellent a work of God is that quick succession to one another? The supposition of a *perpetual night*, is a dismal gloomy Thought. O what will the Everlasting Darkness of the Infernal Prison be! The Sun by day enlightens the Earth, directs our motion, guides our way, governs our Travail, assists Conversation, awakens Industry, warms the Earth and Air, gives life, and vigor, and fruitfulness to all things under the Sun, and makes the whole Inferior Creation to rejoyce. An Emblem of God's universal Goodness, who is kind to all his Creatures. How admirable is its Lustre! how glorious is its Light! how loudly doth it proclaim his Power and Wisdom! who made this, and the other Lights of Heaven, his powerful Word, and preserves them hitherto by his daily Providence. If God be now so glorious,

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contemplated in his works, considered in the lustre of the created Sun, viewed only through the Windows of Sense; how much more glorious will he appear hereafter, when we shall see him face to face, and nothing interpose btwixt us and his incomparable Light! If mine Eyes dazle to look upon the meridian Sun, in what inaccessible Light must he dwell, who is *the Father of Lights*? If this lower World, the common receptacle of his Friends and Enemies, have so much of his Glory vouchsafed them by the Heavenly Bodies; O what a place will *Heaven* be, where shall be no *Sun or Moon* nor need of any, *but the Glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb be the Light thereof?* While I thus consider the Sun and the Day, I must not think the *Night* is useless, which discovers another part of the Heavens, not discernible by Day, *viz.* the Stars and Planets, refreshing the Earth, cooling the Air, giving necessary Rest to the Creatures &c. their order, motions, aspects, oppositions, influences, are all useful, and instructive. The agreeable mixture of Light and Darkness, the regular succession of Day and Night within a few hours are exceeding wonderful and advantagious. In other parts of the World, where the Sun beams are more direct

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and its Heat exceſſive, God hath made amends by the length of the *night*, (under the Equinoctial Line it is always Twelve hours) and in the more Northern parts, where the Influence of the Sun is weaker, the *days* are proportionably longer. So good is God to all his Creatures, in all parts of the world! As the Morning and Evening anſwer to the day of Twenty four hours; ſo doth Spring and Autumn to the Twelve Months of the Year, that we may not paſs immediately from one extreme to another; but gradually be diſpoſed for ſo great a change, as is between Summer and Winter, and Winter and Summer. So merciful and gracious, and infinitely wiſe is God in all his Works! ſo that we cannot ſay, one part of the Year is more neceſſary than another. The *winter* is as uſeful for the good of the Univerſe, as the *ſummer*: In this we are ſupplied with what is neceſſary to maintain us in that, and the admirable ſituation of the Sun, (moſt probably) in the Center of the World, ſeems much to contribute to it. If it had been at a farther diſtance from us, our earth would have been in a manner deſolate; be cauſe the influence of the Sun could not have been conſiderable.

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And if it had been nearer, the Stars above would have wanted Light, and this Earth under, been burnt up. The Excellent order which it hath now obeyed for above six Thousand Years, is also wonderful. The Sun never stood still but once, and that by a miracle; Tho much inferior to that of its daily Progress. What a subject is here to admire the Power, Goodness, Wisdom, and Faithfulness of God? *Lord! what is Man!* for whom thou dost all this? And because I find every year that the Day dies into Night, the Summer into Winter, and herbs and plants lose their beauty and verdure, and shed their blossoms; may I not hence learn to consider and prepare for my own approaching Change? In prosperity, health, and ease, and life, to expect, and make provision for trouble, sickness, pain, and Death? as every wise man in Summer would do for Winter; and work all my might, *while it is called to day*, while the Light continues, because the Night of darkness is at hand, when none can work.

VIII.

Of Evils *to be expected in this Year; the Wisdom and Mercy of God, in* concealing *from us the knowledge of* future Events.

NOt only few, and uncertain, but *Evil* likewise *are the days of the Years of my Life*, may every one say, with the Patriarch *Jacob*. A sufficient portion of *Evil* for every year may well be expected, when our Lord tells us, there is a certain measure allotted for every day. *Sufficient to the day is the evil of it.* Not only is our Life short, but troublesome, full of vexatious Mixtures. We cannot sing a *Requiem* to our Souls, when *one* great Calamity is past; for we know not, in this Region of Changes, but *another*, a *greater* may be at hand. One Messenger of ill News may succeed and out-do another, as it was with *Job*. We come weeping into the World in a most helpless forlorn state; and if we escape the dangers of *Infancy*, and the casualties of *Childhood*; and after that, out-live the Snares and Follies of *Youth*, We

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are toſt upon the Pikes of *Time* and *Chance*, and ſadden and diſquiet our ſelves with a thouſand *Griefs* and *Sorrows*, by inevitable and unexpected occaſions; though we increaſe the number of needleſs *Cares* and *Fears*, and *Diſcontents*; Till at length a ſudden ſtroke arreſts us, we fetch a groan, and die. Who can give a Catalogue of the Afflictions and Calamities, Perplexities and Diſappointments, Incumbrances, Croſſes, and evil Accidents of Humane Life? By means whereof Millions are diſconſolate and ſad, mourn and complain, weep and ſigh, and from day to day are *fed with the Bread of Affliction, and the water of Adverſity.* Not to mention mens fluctuating reſtleſs Thoughts of Heart, importunate Deſires, baffled Projects, defeated Purpoſes, which ſuppoſe or bring vexation. A good ſhare of theſe is not to be avoided; and yet very few can be particularly foreſeen. Who could prognoſticate a year ago the Mercies or the Evils, which have happened ſince? Publick and private, perſonal and relative, to the Countries, Cities, Families and Perſons we are concerned for? And who can certainly foretel the Events of this enſuing Year? God hath intermixt Good and E-

vil in the Life of Man: He hath ſet *Proſperity* againſt *Adverſity*, ſaith *Solomon*, to the end, *that Man ſhould find nothing after him. Eccleſ.* 7. 14. that he may not know what ſhall come next, whether a Proſperous or a Calamitous Event. What a change may be made in a year by the meer Caſualty of humane Events? by the treachery of Friends, or the malice of Enemies, or the more immediate Hand of God? We know *not what ſhall be on the Morrow*, much leſs what a twelve Month may produce. Becauſe whatever may be diſpoſed to happen, from natural cauſes, or civil counſels, may be altered by a particular decree of Providence. Prepare me *Lord!* and every of thoſe in whoſe Felicity I more eſpecially take part, for all the Calamities and Sorrows, thine infinite Wiſdom ſhall think fit to exerciſe us with, this following year: and by thy merciful Providence, and gracious Conduct, cauſe them to work for Good: Furniſhing us with ſuitable ſtrength and wiſdom, to acquieſce in thy good Pleaſure, and obey thy Will. Let me follow thee, as the Father of the Faithful, 'tho I know not whither thou wilt lead me. Knowing the wiſdom and faithfulneſs of my Pilot, let me therein

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be ſatisfied, though I know not particularly what courſe he will ſteer. I thank thee, *O Heavenly Father!* that thou haſt reſerved the knowledg of future Times and Seaſons to thy ſelf, and *hid* Events from Men; Leſt by conſidering them *Certain*, we ſhould preſume in caſe they are *Good*; or ſhould deſpairingly afflict our ſelves, by foreſeeing the *Evil* we know, to be *inevitable*. Did we *certainly* foreknow the *Good* that would befal us, we ſhould not *Truſt* in thee to bring it to paſs, or heartily implore thy Care and Conduct. Did we foreſee the *Evils* we ſhall ſuffer, before they overtake us, we ſhould be overwhelmed with diffidence and *Deſpair*. Many a *Mother* who rejoiceth at the Birth of a *Son*, would mourn to foreſee what a *Man*, what a *Son* he will prove. Such an *increaſe of Knowledg would increaſe our Sorrow*; ſuch a Preſcience would tranſport and diſcompoſe us, by *unſeaſonable Joys* and *Sorrows*, born out of Time; make us remiſs in our Duty to Thee; and weaken our Dependance on thine own unerring Wiſdom, Truth, and Power.

IX.

The Supposition of dying this Year, should be improved: the consequence of redeeming Time, *and providing for* Eternity *farther prest. The Folly of* Elder *Persons is condemned and checkt from the* Example *of* Children. *'Tis adviseable to familiarize the* Thoughts *of* Death, *and to imagine before-hand what Apprehensions of things we shall* then *have.*

THe longest Life is but a *day* multiplied; and who can certifie or assure me, which will be my *last*? He only who was God as well as Man, could say, *Mine Hour is not yet come.* Is all my Life given me to resolve this Question, *Whether I shall be in Heaven or Hell for Ever*? And have I any time to lose, and squander away, as superfluous? have I any more than needs? Tis no impossible or unreasonable Supposition to make, that *I may dye this year.* Let me admit that Thought, and imagine my self on a Bed of Sickness, wearied with Pain, and ready to leave this World: the Physicians gone, despairing of my recovery: my Friends

Friends about me weeping: and all things in a doleful melancholy Poſture, ſuited to ſuch a ſtate; feeling within my ſelf the preſages of Death; expecting the final ſtroke, in an hour or two more: What is *then* the value of ſenſual Pleaſures? can I then reliſh or favour them? what *then* is Honour to *me*, who ſhall never go abroad more to receive it, till carried to my Grave? will it *then* comfort me to have lived in Reputation, and Applauſe, if my Heart was not humble under it, and the Honour of God promoted by it? can Riches and a great Eſtate ſupport me, when I am juſt packing up for a removal to the other World? in that hour will it be any ſatisfaction, to have made a ſtir and noiſe for a few years upon Earth, to be talkt of for a while longer than other Men? are theſe the things my dying thoughts will be moſt concerned to reflect on? Theſe dignities, pleaſures, and poſſeſſions offered to a dying Man, would rather upbraid than tempt him; they come too late, as a Princes Pardon to a Man whoſe Head is off. *Die I muſt*, and appear before my Judge, to anſwer for all that I have received and done in the Body. *Fool* that I was, (ſhall I then too juſtly

ſay to my ſelf,) not to have conſidered this much ſooner! not to have provided for it at a better rate! my Sins ſtare me in the face, my Conſcience tells me I am not ready for ſuch a Trial: I have lived a ſtranger to ſuch thoughts as now I cannot refuſe, and which ſhould have been admitted ſooner. But if to ſuch a ſtate any hope of Mercy may be granted, (tho it be unſpeakably little,) yet I cannot promiſe my ſelf any ſuch warning by ſickneſs. The *ſleeping Virgins* were called at *Midnight*, and ſo may I. Where can I pitch my Tents on Earth to be ſecure againſt a ſudden remove? *Lord!* make theſe Thoughts effectual to prevent my loſs of *precious Time*, which at ſuch a ſeaſon, will be eſteemed precious, though now it be not. O how *ſwift*, how ſhort is my *Time* of Trial in order to *Eternity!* how difficult, how important a work is it to prepare for an *Everlaſting State!* What is all this World, how little, how meer a nothing, to a departing Soul! and ſhall I after ſuch Reflections, continue to purſue ſhadows, and pleaſe my ſelf with empty dreams? when being ſo near my final Judgment, the common wiſdom of a Man requires me to mind it in good earneſt; and be more ſollicitous

licitous about it than for any thing Temporal? O in what manner will *Death* open my Eyes, by ſhutting the Windows of Senſe! How ſhall I then ſee the nothingneſs of what is but *Temporal*, and the reality of what is *Eternal*! We ſometimes laugh to ſee the vanity of *little Children*, who are greatly pleaſed with painted toys, and buſily imployed about trifles. It extorts a ſmile to ſee them eager, and induſtrious, and mightily concerned in their childiſh ſports: to ſee them fight or weep for little things which we deſpiſe: to obſerve with what ſollicitude and care they'l raiſe a little fabrick, which three Moments after they themſelves pull down, or would otherwiſe tumble of its own accord. We laugh at theſe, but ſhould weep over our ſelves, as the *greater and elder Fools*; who are every whit as ſilly, yea infinitely more; ſo that conſidering we know the frailty of our preſent Life, and can look beyond the Grave to another World, ſhould yet miſpend our precious time on things which cannot profit; and pleaſe our ſelves with what is ſo unſuitable to our Age and State; and ſuffer our Paſſions to work with violence, for a thing of nought; and our greateſt diligence, care, and zeal to be exerciſed on

things impertinent and vain; that are periſhing in themſelves, and can contribute nothing to our Eternal welfare. And is it not thus with reference to all that Men toil and labour for with the neglect of an immortal State?

The voluptuous *Sadducee* will not refuſe the preſent gratification of his ſenſual Appetite, becauſe he is uncertain of another day. *Let us eat and drink, for to Morrow we dye.* Should not the ſame motive quicken my Diligence in a better work? and becauſe my Lord may *come ſuddenly as a Thief in the Night*, immediately prepare to meet him? Let me now therefore, O my Soul! look forward to the end of Life and Time! and ſo let me eſteem and ſeek, and chooſe, and do every thing in the firſt place, which then I ſhall wiſh I had! Let me do nothing now, which I verily believe I ſhall then be aſhamed, or ſorry to reflect on: that by thinking what a condition I ſhall then wiſh to have my Soul in, I may now provide my ſelf, much better than I have done hitherto. That while I am in the greateſt probability of living, I may ſuppoſe my change to be near, and ſo not dare to do any thing, but what I would or might do, if I were in the preſent expecta-

tion

tion of death. To this end, let me go down to the *Potters houſe*, deſcend to the conſideration of my *Mortality*, and dwell among the Tombs; remembring the *Ægytians* built themſelves better Tombs than Houſes, becauſe they were to dwell longer in them. Let every Nights repoſe ſerve me as a memorial of my *laſt ſleep*! and let my Bed ſtand for the model of my *Coffin*! This is the only way, to be dead to this World; to be able to judge of things now, as we ſhall do after Death, according to immutable Eternal Truth.

X.

The Brevity of Life conſidered as the fruit of Sin. There are but three *ways of leaving this World, as* Abel, Adam, *or* Enoch. *A diligent improvement of Time farther preſt: and the neglect of it bewailed.*

THE ſhortning of our Days is the fruit of Sin. All the *Funerals* that have ever been in the World, have been cauſed by Sin. We dye becauſe we have ſinned, and yet we ſhould not ſin as now, if this were not forgot, that we *muſt* dye. From the firſt Tranſgreſſion of *Adam* we

we derive our death; and therefore ſome of his Poſterity lived longer than he. Which proves that the lengthning of our Days is the peculiar *Gift* of God; and yet 'tis ſuch a Gift as was more deſired formerly, than ſince the appearance of Chriſt: for we read of none in the New Teſtament, ſince *Life and Immortality is brought to light by the Goſpel*, who deſired a long continuance here on Earth. Were we delivered from *Sin*, the ſting of Death, by having made our Peace with God in the Blood of Jeſus, Death would not be frightful, or put on ſuch a ghaſtly Vizor, as to moſt it doth. But we are uncertain of our *Juſtification*, we waver between hopes and fears as to our final Sentence; and are conſcious to our ſelves that we are *not ready* for our great Account. This makes Death ſo terrible. Conſidering with all that it is inevitable; *the way of all the Living*. For tho' the curſe be removed, and the ſting be taken out by our B. *Saviour*; ſo that the *Souls* of Believers are ſafe, and ſhall not be toucht by the *ſecond* Death: yet God hath not taken away the ſtroke of it from the Body. Tho' a Chriſtian is aſſured of deliverance from *Hell*, he is not exempted from the *Grave*, as his paſſage to *Heaven*.

Prepare

Prepare me, Lord! by the free Remiſſion of all my Sins, and make me meet for the Bleſſed Inheritance, by ſanctifying Grace; and then thy Time is beſt; *Thy holy Will be done.* No matter then, whether my Death be *violent*, or what we call *Natural.* It will be one of the *two*, for I can't expect to be *Tranſlated*, by a miraculous change, as Holy *Enoch* was, and as they ſhall be, who ſhall be found alive in the World, when our Glorious Judge ſhall come again. There are but thoſe *three ways* of leaving Earth: and the *Three firſt Men* of whoſe departure we read in Scripture, are Inſtances of all Three. *Abel* of a violent *Death*, *Adam* of a natural one, and *Enoch* of a Tranſlation. The variety and order of their Departure, as one obſerves, is very admirable, and deſerves to be conſidered. For all Mankind muſt follow one or other of thoſe three Examples. Every Man or Woman, that is born into the World, muſt leave it by one of thoſe *three* ways; Either be cut off by a *violent Death*, as *Abel*, the *firſt* Man who dyed: or dye a *natural death*, as *Adam* did, who was the *ſecond*: or be *tranſlated*, as *Enoch*, who was the *Third* we read of.

But

But tho' I know that within a few years at fartheſt I muſt leave this World by one or other of theſe ways; tho' I have been dying ever ſince I began to live; am Dead to the laſt year, and to all the preceding Portions of my Time; and know withal, that what remains will quickly paſs and be gone, after the ſame manner; yet how have I overloved this Body, as if I ſhould never live out of it! and ſet my Heart and Affections on this World, as if I ſhould never remove to another! and trifled away my precious Time and Life, as if a change would never come!

That few do ſeriouſly admit ſuch thoughts is too evident, by the general courſe and practice of their Lives. For to what hazards do Men expoſe themſelves? what pains will they take? what Inconveniences will they bear? with what unwearied Induſtry will they toyl and labour, to get a little Money, or Honour in this World, tho' they know not but they may be called out of it, before the end of *this* Year? And yet the ſame Perſons are remiſs and ſlothful about a future Life; negligent and unconcerned about an Eternal ſtate; careleſs and indifferent, yea ſottiſhly ſtupid, about

about the welfare of their Immortal Souls. Henceforward, O my Soul! whatever other others do, let me resolve to live in the expectation of a *Change*, which I know is *certain*, and may be very *near*.

XI.

Of the Expectation *of* Another Life. *The Vanity and Misery of* Man *in his* Best Estate, *if there be none. The satisfactory removal of that supposition by the Thoughts of God, and of* Eternal Felicity *in his Blessed Presence.*

LET me retire a little, *O my Soul!* and bethink my self, what a World this is; what Men design and seek, and do and suffer; with what false and feigned Joys they are pleased, being only happy by comparison; and with what real Sorrows they are afflicted; what innumerable disappointments, sicknesses, (and as troublesome remedies,) dangers, labors, pains, and calamities of all sorts, Multitudes groan under, and loudly complain of? and what little unworthy ends are pursued by all that do not seriously seek Eternal Rest? and how often frustrated?

ſtrated? And withal conſider the Cares that diſquiet us, the errors that deceive us, the many Temptations that aſſault and overcome us; how buſie we are about Vanities; how often dejected, and melancholy for the breaking of a Bubble; how eager and induſtrious to purſue a Shadow; active and in earneſt to deſtroy our ſelves, and one another; and then reflect on the Malice, and cruelty, the Filthineſs, and Impiety, and great Corruption, which abounds every where; whereby God is diſhonoured, and provokt to Anger? After this what a Theater of *Tragedies*, muſt this World appear? what an *Hoſpital* of ſick, and diſeaſed, or rather diſtracted Perſons? How ſhould I be tempted to ſay, *Lord! why haſt thou made all Men in vain?* If I could not look from this Sea of troubles, to the Haven of Reſt; from this dark Priſon, to the Region of Light; from this deceitful, troubleſome, and defiling *Earth*, to a Bleſſed, Everlaſting *Heaven:* For *verily*, if there be no World but this, *every Man in his beſt Eſtate* in this World, *is altogether Vanity*, *Selah. Pſal.* 39. 5. 'Tis a certain undoubted Truth, the prefixed *verily* tells us ſo; and that it deſerves to be well conſidered, we learn from the

the concluding *Selah*, *Every Man is Vanity*. Not the Inferior parts of the Creation only; But *Man* the Lord of all: And *Every Man*, every *Adam* from himſelf, to the laſt Man that ſhall by ordinary Generation deſcend from him. Not the Ignorant, Poor, or Wicked only, but *all* the Individuals of this Species. Young or Old, ſtrong or weak, beautiful or deformed, rich or poor, high or low, good or bad, (in reſpect of the Body, and this preſent Life,) every one is *vanity*; and this is true, ſuppoſe him in his *Beſt Eſtate*, not only in helpleſs Infancy and Childhood, or in decrepit old Age, not only in pain, and poverty, and diſgrace; but in his moſt ſetled, moſt flouriſhing, moſt envied, and admired condition upon Earth; in the midſt of ſtrength, and wit, and honour; when at *beſt*, as to body, and mind, and outward Circumſtances; when he looks faireſt, when he ſhines brighteſt; in the height of all his Glory, with the greateſt likelihood of a Continuance; yet *then* he is but *vanity*. In his frame, in his temper, conſtitution, inclinations, actions, and imployment; he is a meer *Shadow*, an empty, mutable, inconſiderable thing, and not to be accounted of.

His

His Heart, his head, his imaginations, reaſonings, deſires, purpoſes, projects, hopes, and fears, are all *Vanity*; and *altogether Vanity*, in all the parts, and kinds, and particulars of it. He not only *may* be, but *he is ſo*, in his *beſt Eſtate*: if this World be his *Beſt*; if this be *our All*, and nothing more to be expected after death. And how ſhould ſuch a Reflection ſtrike me to the Heart, to ſuppoſe that after a few years are ended, I muſt return to my firſt Nothing, and my very being be (*f*) ſwallowed up of Eternal Death! what ſatisfaction can I then take in any preſent Enjoyments, if an Eternal Annihilation be at hand, when I muſt bid adieu for ever to all that I now poſſeſs? What delight can I have in the ordinary comforts of Life, with this Belief, that within a year or two, it may be to Morrow, I ſhall ſink into the duſt, and exiſt no more? What Pleaſure in any thing with this diſmal Expectation? The more flouriſhing my condition is in this World, the more ſhould I dread to loſe it, if nothing better, nothing at all, can be

(*f*) *Vid. Mr.* How's *vanity of Man as mortal.*

injoyned

injoyed after Death. Some Philoſophers have ignorantly urged ſuch a conſideration as an *Antidote* againſt the fear of death; but the admiſſion of it may rather deprive a Man of all the comfort of Life. What then is the advantage of a Wiſe Man above a Fool? the exerciſe and improvement of our nobleſt Faculties would render us more miſerable than others, if nothing be expected, and certain, when this Life is over. Not only ſenſual, but intellectual Pleaſures would be diſturbed and deſtroyed by ſuch Thoughts; that very ſhortly, the next Year, or Day, I muſt diſappear; and all my Injoyments and Hopes be utterly and for ever loſt, with my very Being. Were the caſe thus, (which ſuch Conſequences evince it is not,) it were better for moſt Men they had never been Born; whether their condition here be Proſperous, or Afflicted. For what Comfort or quiet can any Man have in Plenty and *Proſperity*, when this frightful apprehenſion of an approaching end is ever preſent? and what conſolation can it yield a Man who is afflicted and *Calamitous*, and yet loves his *Life* above all things; to think that he ſhall not ceaſe to be *miſerable*, but by ceaſing to

be?

be? And what is become of all *Religion*, if ſuch a thought be entertained? All devotion to God is thereby extinguiſht, all the reſtraints of vice removed, the Flood-gates of Impiety opened, the encouragements of Vertue, the rewards of Holineſs; the Foundation of Tribulation, and ſuffering for Righteouſneſs ſake; all at once taken away. *Lord!* confirm my Belief of the inviſible future ſtate of Rewards and Puniſhments! and let not *Sadduciſm* and *Infidelity* damp my zeal in thy ſervice, or rob me of the comforts of *this Life*, which, if I have any ſolid ones, muſt ſuppoſe the hopes of a *Better*. Let others therefore, *O my Soul!* who expect not an Everlaſting Heaven beyond the Grave, place their affections on Earthly things and mind this World, as if there were no betrer, no other. Let them who doubt, or disbelieve the promiſed rewards of *Eternity*, take up with what they muſt ſhortly leave, and labour for the Bread that periſheth. But ſince I profeſs to believe and ſeek the *Life Everlaſting*; let me daily entertain my ſelf with the hopes of it, and let all the flattering dreams of what is deſirable upon Earth, give place to nobler and better thoughts. Let me derive my principal Joy, from the

the promiſe and expectation of that future Felicity, and endeavour nothing more than a meetneſs to partake of it. *O my God, my God!* thou art my *Life*, and *Joy*, and *Portion*; in thee, and in thy love, all my deſires, and hopes are anſwered, and all my wants ſupplied. However *Evil* this World is made by Sin, yet thou art the infinite and ſupream *Good*. How mutable, how uncertain, how periſhing ſoever are all ſublunary things; yet thou art the rock of Ages, the fountain of everlaſting Life, and haſt appointed another World, and another Life, when this is ended, wherein thou wilt be better known, and loved, and ſerved, and honoured, and communicate thy ſelf more abundantly than now, to thoſe, the deſire of whoſe Souls is towards thee, that believe and love thee, that partake of thine Image, and are devoted to thy Fear. The aſſurance of *this* and nothing elſe, will anſwer the objection of the preſent *vanity* and *miſery* we are ſubject to.

XII.

XII.

The consideration of the Death of others, *especially of* Relations, Friends, *and* Acquaintance, *how to be improved. What instructions we may learn by the sight of a* dead Carkass, *or a* Deaths Head, *and the usual Motto on it: and what by the Death of* Holy *Persons, to quicken our desires to be as they.*

HAth divine Patience added *one year* more to the number of my Days, when so many others were removed by Death the *last* Year? Others, whom a few Months since I knew in vigorous health; wiser, stronger, more likely to live, and to answer the ends of Life than me; some of them, my near Relations, and useful Friends; in whose converse I took delight, and promised my self advantage by their Company and Examples; But they are taken, and I am left. *Thy Holy Will*, O Lord! *is done*: and they, who were prepared, are infinite Gainers by this my loss. Quicken my preparations by following their Piety, to meet them in thy Heavenly Kingdom. Let thy long-suffering lead me to Repentance;

pentance; and ſuffer me not to ſlight thy warning by the *Death of others*, to expect my *own*. *Lord!* cure my Earthly-mindedneſs, and practical unbelief; and by all ſuch admonitions of thy Providence, teach me to poſſeſs, and uſe this World, as knowing I muſt ſhortly leave it; and let not the thoughts of my Mortality wear off, aſſoon as the Funeral of my Friends is over.

Every year ſome or other of our *Acquaintance* drop into the Grave, we attend them thither, and lament, it may be, for a few days, their departure and removal; but conſider not, that others will e're be long do the ſame for us; it may before *this* year is ended. Oh how ſoon do we forget our deceaſed Friends, and *our ſelves*, who are likewiſe dying! and count upon a long Life, which we cannot reaſonably expect; and hug the enjoyments of this tranſitory World, as if our preſent ſtate would laſt for ever! Will nothing but our own diſſolution effectually convince us of our miſtake, and folly, in this particular?

Though the Arrows of Death flye continually round about us; ſometimes over our *Heads*, when Superiours are taken away; ſometimes fall at our *Feet*, when Children

Children and Servants, and Inferiours die; sometimes on our *Left hand*, when an Enemy is cut off; and while I am pleased with that, in that very hour, it may be, another Arrow on our *Right hand* strikes the Friend of our Bosom and Delight. And can we see all this, that great and small, high and low, friends and foes are all Vanity, and drop down dead round about us; and shall we not consider, that *we* are as *Vain* as *they*, and must shortly follow? Shall we not by a Christian *Chymistry* extract Spirits out of these dead Bones? and by these Examples learn *the End of all Men*, and lay it to Heart?

Whenever I see the *Funeral* of another, let me think thus with my self; why might not I have been that Man or Woman, that is now carried to the Grave? If we had been compared a few days since, 'tis probable I should have been thought as likely to have been his *Monitor*, by dying first, as he mine. By such an improvement of these warnings, the request of the rich Man to *Abraham* were in great measure granted; for 'tis a call from the dead that speaks loudly to us, to consider our selves, and prepare in time for so great a change: and say, as the Pro-

pher

phet to *Hezekiah*, *Set thine houſe in order, for thou ſhalt dye.*

Can we look upon a *Deaths Head*, and not remember what we ſhall ſhortly be? may not much be learnt from its common Motto? *Sum quod Eris, Fueramque quod Es. I am that which thou ſhalt ſhortly be, and have been that which thou art now:* that is, I have been as gay and jocund, as brisk and merry, as proud and vain, as rich and great, as careleſs and ſecure, as honourable and as much eſteemed, as beautifull and as well beloved, as witty and as learned, as *Thou art* or canſt be *now*. I valued my ſelf as much upon my Eſtate and Trade, and health, and beauty; upon my Education, Profeſſion, Imployments, Parts, Friends, Family &c. *as thou* haſt ever done, or canſt do: I lived in eaſe and pleaſure, in mirth and jollity; I minded the World as much, and indulged my ſelf as much in ſenſuality; and was as careful of my Body, pampered and pleaſed my Fleſh as much *as thou*, and thought as little of a ſudden Death, and prepared as little for ſuch a change, *as thou doſt:* but now my dry Bones are lookt upon with contempt and ſcorn, but *thou* ſhalt ſhortly return to duſt, and be as vile as I am.

It cannot but affect us, did we consider it, to see divers snatch'd away in their *Youth*, and outward *Prosperity*; and in the midst of their *Sin* and *Folly*, without any visible signs of true *Repentance*: Or in terrible anguish and horror for their past crimes: And yet how few do take the warning, carefully to prevent the like unhappiness? *O Lord!* preserve those strong Convictions, those serious Thoughts, those holy Resolutions, those lively Apprehensions of the Life to come, of the Evil of sin, and the Terrors of thy wrath, which the Sight of dying persons hath at any time awakened in my soul! O the *Eloquence* of a *dying Sinner*, to persuade to *Repentance!* Even when he hath lost his *Speech*, and lies gasping, and trembling, on a bed of sickness; breathing out his last faint breath, and passing into the other world, to answer for the crimes and follies of a wicked Life! *Lord!* revive these thoughts upon my soul, and let me feel the power and influence of them, in the hour of *Temptation*, and in every time of need! And let the consideration of *the death of Believers*, the *Blessedness* they are thereby entred into, and the *Holiness* they are possessed of, quicken my desires

and diligence to prepare to follow. When I think where *they* are, and what they are doing, what is their work, and what their ſtate, what their continual imployment, and what their Injoyments; and how different from ours: I cannot but wiſh to be with them; to be as they are, and do as they do, to know and love and praiſe God *as they*. They are not hindred by ſuch a clog as *this Body* is to us; or tempted by their ſenſes, appetite and fancy, to ſin againſt him: they complain not of a ſeducing fleſh, unruly paſſions, low and diſordered thoughts, of Temporal Afflictions, ſpiritual Deſertions, the ſnares of the World, and the malice and ſubtility of the Devil: *We* who are *Pilgrims* and *Travellers* are expoſed to theſe difficulties, and ſtorms which *they* are freed from. They are now rejoycing in the light of Gods countenance, and ſhall never queſtion his love more, while we are in Tears and Sorrows, groaning to be delivered.

But think, *O my ſoul*! that *They were* lately ſuch as *We are now*. They *were* members of the militant Church, before they entred into Joy and Triumph. They *had* their conflicts and difficulties, their hour of Temptation, and time of trial, as

we have *ours*. They *were* ſlandered, and perſecuted, and ſadned, and diſappointed, as their Followers are: They went to Heaven the ſame way, and got the victory after the ſame manner, by Repentance, and Faith, and humble perſevering Obedience. *They were* once imperfect as we are now; and complained of the Body of Sin and Death, and ſtrugglings of unmortified luſt, as we do: And were ſometimes in the dark about their intereſt in the promiſe, and walked heavily by the hiding of Gods face, and indured Temptation, *even as we*. And as we have nothing to do, or ſuffer, but what they met with; we have the ſame encouragement, that adminiſtred to their ſupport; the ſame God and Saviour, the ſame way and rule, the ſame aſſiſtance, by the aids of his H. Spirit, offered to us; the ſame promiſes, and the ſame rewards propoſed, which they enjoyed, firſt in faith and hope, and afterwards in fruition. Yea they paſſed through the dark valley, and ſo muſt we: Their Earthly tabernacle was diſſolved, and ſo muſt ours be. We muſt expect to go *the ſame way* to Reſt and Glory; and wait Gods Time for our admiſſion. We muſt finiſh firſt the work which God hath for us to do and

and ſuffer, and then all Tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes, we ſhall *grieve no more*, we ſhall *ſin no more*, but be as the *Angels* in Heaven, or as the Spirits of the Juſt, made Perfect.

XIII.

What Influence the conſideration of Eternity *would have upon our* Hearts *and* Lives, *if ſoundly believed and conſidered. Eſpecially if the ſuppoſition of* Dying this year *be annexed to it.*

WIth what Humility, Mortification, and Self-denial, what Seriouſneſs, Watchfulneſs, and reſolved Conſtancy, would every Chriſtian live on Earth, did he act alwaies under the influence and power of a confirmed Faith concerning the Life to come? We ſhould not then grudge at a little labor, or boggle at a few difficulties in our way. What tho' I meet with injuries and affronts, hadſhips and inconveniencies; Being now in *a Foreign Country*, and every day I live, one daies journey nearer my Eternal Home! Shall I not patiently bear momentany Sorrows, while I believe I am haſtening to *Eternal*

Joys? Did I look more to *the Everlasting World*, should I not make the pleasing of God, in order to my Eternal welfare, the great business of my Life? Should I not serve the Lord with more fervency of Spirit, and be better fortified against the fears of man, who can but hurt and kill the *Body*, nor that neither, without the permission of God? Should I not order all my affairs, answer all Temptations, mortifie inward Lusts, live in the Exercise of Grace, and in circumspect persevering Obedience, in order to it? Should I not watch more over my Heart, and Lips and Ways, be more diligent to trim my Lamps, more crucified to this world, more careful to call my self frequently to an account, and renew my Repentance? Would not my converse be more useful and edifying, my discourses more savory and full of Religion, my Prayers to God more humble and earnest, my Charity to men more unfeigned and extensive, and my preparations every way more suitable to such a *Faith*, and to such apprehensions of *an Everlasting State?* Could we carry the thoughts of *Eternity* about with us every day, and often admit them in our civil and secular affairs, did we repeat it frequently to our selves, at

least

leaſt *every Morning*, as ſoon as we are awake, that we are near *Eternity*; this grain of Incenſe would perfume the whole Temple; and be an Antidote againſt inward Luſt, and impure Thoughts, againſt the Infection and defilement of bad Company, and the *ſnares* of worldly Buſineſs, and do much to prevent vain and ſenſual actions, and to cure vain affections.

Did we *believe it*, and believe it *near*, ſhould we not take as much pains to ſecure Eternal Life, as we ſee Men do to get Riches? Should we not uſe the ſame diligence, care, and circumſpection, the ſame prudent foreſight, watchfulneſs, and perſeverance, to prevent Everlaſting deſtruction as others do to provide againſt Poverty, and to live in Plenty a little while on Earth? Should we not rejoyce as much in the promiſe and hopes of it, as others do in the proſpect and expectation of ſome Earthly Advantage? *Lord*! I confeſs and bewail the weakneſs of my Faith. How often have I concluded, and ſaid, that *Heaven alone* is the place of *Happineſs*, and yet my carnal Heart is too much affected with Earthly Things! How often have I reſolved, (*upon the conviction of the certainty*

of the Eternal World,) to mind *this* less, and to affect and seek it no more as I have done! and yet my foolish Heart is hankering after it still. O crucifie my affections to things below! and let the believing Thoughts of the *next Life*, render me victorious over all the Temptations of *this*. Pardon and cure the staggering trembling Thoughts of an unbelieving Heart, by greater measures of a lively *Faith*. That my desires may be strong and urgent; and my diligence and stedfastness in the way of Truth, be some way correspondent to this important Article. Let me live only for *Eternity*, hope for nothing but *Eternity*, design and intend nothing as my chief end, but *Eternity*, and seek and mind nothing in comparison with *Eternity*! Did we believe it, how would every thing in this World be lookt upon as eligible, or fit to be refused, as it is like to be an *help*, or an *hindrance*, with reference to *Eternity!* we should then endeavour to do nothing unbecoming such an Expectation. Considering this World as our *Passage*, and the invisible future World as our *abiding Country*, where we are to dwell *for ever*; whatever we meet with *here*, whether sweet or bitter, easy or troublesome,

ſome, pleaſing or ungrateful, we ſhould not much matter, but as it relates to *hereafter*.

And were I *certain* I ſhould have no longer time of Trial in order to this Eternal State, than *this one year*, which is now begun: if a Meſſenger from God ſhould convincingly aſſure me of it; what would I not do to prepare for *Death*, and ſecure the intereſts of *Eternity*? With what *remorſe* and deep *Repentance* ſhould I reflect on the *Follies* of my paſt Life? With what importunate cries ſhould I beg *Forgiveneſs*? How *patiently* ſhould I bear *Calamity*, for ſo ſhort a time? How little ſhould I value the favours or frowns of Men? How circumſpect to improve every *Seaſon* of doing and receiving good? How careful to avoid *Temptation*, and how reſolute in reſiſting it? Did I verily believe I had no longer time to live on Earth, than *this one Year* at moſt: how inſipid would be the offer of carnal Mirth, vain Paſtime, ſenſual Diverſions, idle Company, *&c.*? how ſhould I value every Hour, every inch of my little *Time*, under the apprehenſion that *Eternity is at hand*? O my Soul! ſhall I make no proviſion againſt the poſſiblity of ſuch a caſe? Is not my change as certain, as if it were this year, as if it were to Morrow? tho' I am not certain it is ſo near,

nor certain but it may be. Let me then *seek first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*: let me fix it well, and make it clear, that I have secured my *great Concern*, and am ready for a sudden summons.

XIV.

How a Good Man may improve *and* encourage *himself under the* Supposition *of dying* this Year, *even in the most uneasy and undesirable Circumstances.*

I *May dye this Year*: then all my Cares and Fears, if I am *Rich*, all my Sorrows and calamities as to this World, if I am *Poor*, will die too. *I may dye this Year*: then I shall have no more Enemies, no more Sickness, and which is infinitely better, I shall *Sin* no more. *I must* shortly *die*, it may be, *this Year*: but there is no other way to come to a blessed Life but by dying; and my Saviour hath dyed for me, and he that believes in him, shall never see death. He lives who was once dead, yea he lives for evermore; and hath promised, that I shall be with him to behold his Glory. He hath the Keys of Death and Hell: He is the Resurrection and the Life; he hath removed the sting of Death; and I need not fear a conquered Enemy. *If I dye this Year*, I must quit the Company

of all my dearest *Friends* on Earth; but I shall go to *better Company* above: and if they are the Friends of Christ, we shall shortly *meet* again, and love one another in a better manner than now, and never more be parted. *I may dye this Year*: my *Friends* and *Enemies* may dye too. Let me enjoy the *one* as mortal dying Persons, that must e're long leave me, or I them: and not fear the *other*, who may so soon Perish, and quickly be uncapable of doing me or others Mischief. *I may dye this Year*: let me not then think much of *Temporal Sufferings*, of any Evils which may so soon be over. Oh what would condemned Sinners in the other World give to be able to believe and say so of their Sufferings! *I may dye this Year*: and can I wonder that I am sometimes *Sick*, and in *Pain*, and that my *Body* is out of order? Am I not Mortal, and dwell in an house of Clay, which must shortly moulder into Dust? and is it any thing strange, that such a *crasy Building* doth sometime shake, and need repair, and threaten a dissolution? 'Tis a greater wonder, I am any time well: That such a Body, compounded of so many little parts, and so easily disordered by innumerable accidents, should be in Health,

Health, is hardly leſs to be admired, than that an Inſtrument of a thouſand ſtrings ſhould be kept in Tune. I thank thee, *O Heavenly Father*! for the many advantages of *Sickneſs*, to weaken the power of Sin, to humble my Pride, and cure my Worldlineſs and Senſuality, to reduce me from wandering, to empty me of Self-conceit, to awaken the conſideration of Death and Judgment, to impreſs the Thoughts of the Vanity of this World, and the Eternity of the next, to aſſiſt me to mortifie the Fleſh, to rule my Paſſions, to exerciſe Patience, and quicken Prayer, and try my Faith and Love, and excite my diligence to redeem Time, and convince me of the Worth and Uncertainty of it, and thereby promote my Preparations for my final change. The Great Apoſtle by *dying daily*, had as many victories over this World, as he lived Days. Oh that I might ſo far walk by the ſame Rule, as every day to think of providing for my laſt! and in Health to do that which in Sickneſs I ſhall wiſh I had done!

I may dye this Year: It may be by ſome tedious painful Sickneſs, ſome troubleſome and loathſome Diſeaſe. But God hath promiſed his Grace ſhall be ſufficient; he will

will make my Bed in my Sickneſs; and put under his everlaſting Arms for my ſupport; and not ſuffer me to be tempted above what I am able: he will encreaſe my Patience and carry me thro' the pangs of Death, and the dark valley, and *when Heart and Fleſh fail, be the ſtrength of my Heart, and my Portion for Ever.*

I may dye this year: What if it ſhould be by an hand of *Violence*; if for Righteouſneſs ſake, in defence of the Truth, for a good Cauſe, and a good Conſcience, and my Peace be made with God, and I am accuſed for doing well, or innocent of the Evil which is laid to my charge; there is ground enough for encouragement and ſupport. Thouſands of my *Betters* have met with the like, whoſe names are precious and renowned. Innumerable *Chriſtians* have dyed by the Sentence of *a Judge*, with more Chearfullneſs and Joy, than *others*, or it may be, than *they themſelves*, would have done, by the ſentence of the *Phyſician*. The Torture of many Diſeaſes is unſpeakably more formidable, as to the meer Pain, and for all elſe, the Righteous Lord who loveth Righteouſneſs, will clear my Integrity, if it may beſt ſubſerve his own Great and Holy ends: at leaſt he will ſtand

ſtand by and help me, when all forſake me; and if he ſpeak *Peace*, and give *inward Conſolation*, who can ſpeak *Trouble*? and his final Judgment, which is near at hand, will diſtribute rewards and Puniſhments to all, according to their works.

Suppoſe farther, that I ſhould *want a Sepulcher*, after Death. There is nothing I could better be without. If God receive my *Soul*, and will raiſe my *Body* at the laſt day, whether it putrifie and conſume under ground, or above it, is no great matter. They who are alive will be more concerned in that, than I ſhall be; Graves are for the ſake of the *Living* rather than the Dead. The Sun, the Rain, the Air, Birds, Beaſts, Worms, will all contribute to give me *Burial*, if Men deny it. The only difference is, that it will be a little longer ere I am buried. If my Soul reſt in the Boſom of my Saviour, and by perſevering in the love and practice of the Truth, I have ſecured my Reputation with wiſe and good Men, I need not be ſollicitous what become of my Body. My Almighty Judge will raiſe me a *glorious Body*, like his own, and reunite it to my Soul; As eaſily, as certainly, as for any of thoſe, whoſe Bodies were preſerved in Caves

and

and Vaults, in proud Sepulchers, and under ſtately Monuments.

I may dye this Year; and ſhall not then have the ſatisfaction to ſee my *Children* or neareſt *Kindred* educated and provided for, ſetled and diſpoſed of. But is not the *Everliving God* the ſame? cannot he *as well* take care of them when I am gone, as now? anſwer all my Prayers after my deceaſe? and exerciſe that Fatherly Care, Wiſdom, and Love, which ſhall diſpoſe of their conditions, ſave them from Temptations, and ſupply all their wants, and exceed all my deſires, in reference to them? and fulfill his Covenant promiſe from Generation to Generation, to the Childrens Children of them that fear him? O how *weak* is my *Faith*, that cannot truſt God in ſo common and plain a caſe!

Laſtly, *I may dye this Year:* and not live to ſee the ruin of the *Antichriſtian Kingdom*, and Intereſt, and the accompliſhment of many Excellent Promiſes, which concern the Reſt, and Peace, and Purity and Glory of the Churches of Chriſt on earth in the latter days. But have I not deſerved by my provoking Unbelief, Ingratitude, and Diſobedience, to dye in the Wilderneſs, and not behold

behold the promiſed Land, or ſee the Peace of *Jeruſalem*? and will not the ſtruglings of Satan to ſupport *Babylon*, infer a diſmal night of darkneſs and diſtreſs, before the expected Morning of Deliverance? ſo that it may now, if ever, be truly ſaid, *Henceforth, Bleſſed are the Dead who dye in the Lord.* And if God will take me to himſelf in the other World, I cannot poſſibly be a loſer: tho' I ſhould not ſee the Beginnings of *a New Heaven, and a New Earth*, in this. However I rejoyce in *Hope*, and pray inceſſantly for the Reſurrection of the *Witneſſes*, and the rebuilding of *Sion*, and the more plentiful effuſion of the *H. Spirit*, (the great comprehenſive Promiſe of the later Times) to effect a glorious *Kingdom* for *Chriſt* on Earth: and my Faith aſſures me, I ſhall hereafter ſee the *Son of God* revealed from Heaven, cloathed with Majeſty, ſitting on a Cloud, leading the Heavenly Hoſt, raiſing the Dead by his powerful Voice, ſummoning all the World to appear to Judgment, gathering his Elect, and finally deſtroying Death, and him that had the Power of it, the Devil, condemning the wicked to Everlaſting Deſtruction, but acquitting, honouring, and rewarding,

ing his poor Members, with infinite and Eternal Bleſſedneſs.

XV.

Of Dying in a Foreign Country, *and of Dying* Young. *Conſiderations proper to Reconcile the Mind to both.*

I May not live to the end of this Year; God in his Providence having called me abroad, I may never ſee my *Native Country* more. Let me ſtill remember, O my Soul! that wherever I am, I am travelling towards the Grave, and paſſing to another World: that I may live in all Places, as a *Pilgrim* and *Stranger* here on Earth; with Affections ſuited to my condition, becoming one who is travelling in a Strange Land. Let me bear the Inconveniences I may meet with in this World, as Strangers in their Travels are wont to do. Let me not repine at the ill accomodations of an *Inn*, where I am to lodge but a night or two: but encourage my ſelf with the aſſurance of better Entertainment at home, when my Pilgrimage is ended, and my Journey over. *One* of my deareſt *Holy Friends*, and *Fellow Travellers*, (whoſe memory will

will be ever precious, (*g*) with thoſe who knew him) quickly arrived to his Journeys end, and is entred into Reſt betimes. Which of his Companions ſhall next follow, we know not, or how ſoon. Lord! make me apprehend the nearneſs of my change in every place: and if I am prepared for dying, no matter *where* it be. There is no one Country farther from the Preſence of God than another. The whole World may be conſidered as one Great Houſe, and the ſeveral Kingdoms and Countries of it, but as different *Apartments* in the ſame Houſe: and they who tarry at home are no more exempt from *Death*, than they who travel abroad. *The Earth is the Lords, and the fullneſs thereof*; I can go no where to be out of his Territories, I ſhall ſtill tread upon my Fathers's Ground. I had rather be an *Iſraelite* in a Wilderneſs with the Preſence of God, than a Courtier in Idolatrous *Ægypt*. *Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful, and the friend of God, was baniſhed from his own Country; and ſhould I never ſet foot again on my native Soyl, there is no reaſon of mur-

(*g*) *Mr.* Thomas Bent, *who dyed at* Geneva, *May* 10. 1683.

muring

muring against my God, who hath dealt thus with many of his Favourites. And while I have been in a ſtrange Land, he hath not ſuffered me to feel the wants and neceſſities, and *heart of a Stranger*. Among a People of a ſtrange Language he can, and doth provide for me all things richly to enjoy. I may ſet up my *Ebenezer*, Hitherto hath God ſupplied all my wants.

The Preſence of my Gracious Father is every where the *ſame*: in ſome meaſure, *Bleſſed be my God*, I have hitherto found it ſo. And may I not rejoice in God in a Deſert, though all the World ſhould forſake me; though all the World ſhould be againſt me? Should I have no other Friend or Helper; is not *God*, an infinite God *Enough*? and without his Favour and Preſence, what can all this World do for me? If I am *ſick*, and in danger of Death, among my *Relations* and *Friends*, if *the comforts of the Almighty* do not refreſh and delight my Soul, *they* cannot: and if I want not *theſe* in my laſt Agonies, no matter in what part or corner of the Earth I breath my laſt. If the word and promiſe of God be my Foundation, an holy Hope my Anchor, Chriſt my Pilot, and Heaven my Country, I ſhall not

fail

fail of being landed there at last. Suffer me not to forsake thee, *O Heavenly Father!* while I live; and do not thou forsake me in my *last Hour*; and let it come *when*, and *where* thou wilt! If my blessed Saviour will receive my departing Soul at Death, I am not sollicitous in what Country, or part of the Earth it be.

And that I may not be unwilling in the flower of my Age and Time, *in Youth and Strength*, to leave this World; let me think often, that no one age or part of Life is more priviledged against the stroke of Death than another. If I have done my work betimes, as my deceased *Fellow Traveller* had, is it not better to receive the Blessed Recompence, than to tarry longer, in a World of Sin and Suffering, absent from the Lord? Shall I not thereby escape a multitude of Temptations, Sins, and Sorrows, which others by living longer are exposed to? If my Peace be made with God, what should make me willing to live at this distance from him? What should render this World so desirable, where God is so dishonoured, where I am so often tempted to displease him, and so often yield to such Temptations? And may I not fear lest I should fall into such scandalous and grievous

grievous ſins, that may bring a publick reproach on the Goſpel of Chriſt, and ſadden the Hearts of all my Acquaintance who love the Lord Jeſus in ſincerity? By dying early, I ſhall contract leſs guilt, and commit leſs *Sin*, and ſee and feel leſs *Sorrow* than others who live longer. And tho' I ſhould maintain my Integrity, yet in this World my higheſt love and obedience to God, and my ſweeteſt Communion with him, is but imperfect. How many impediments and Diverſions do I daily meet with, that deaden my Heart to Heavenly Contemplations and Affections? What diſappointments, and ſorrowful diſaſters, to convince me that *this* is not the place of Reſt and Happineſs? What ſmart afflictions may ſome of my *Relations* prove? What dangerous Snares may attend me in the remaining Portion of my Time? What Oppoſition and Hatred from Men may the ſtedfaſt profeſſing of the Truth, and fidelity to God expoſe me to? What publick national Calamities may I have my ſhare in, *&c.*

But if I conſider *old Age* it ſelf, which we do deſire to reach; what and how many are the Infirmities and Griefs, and troubleſome Circumſtances which attend that

that State, which dying young will prevent? Are not moſt Men who reach a very great old Age, helpleſs objects of Pity? A Burthen to themſelves, and to all about them? And (which commonly happens,) may I not *then* be as unwilling to dye, as at preſent? As loth *then* to leave the World as *now*, tho' in a manner it will have left me? For how many old Men, paſt the reliſh of ſenſual Pleaſures, are yet inordinately fond of a longer Life!

Have I not been told by *Heathens*, as well as *Chriſtians*, that 'tis not the length of time, but its improvement, that doth really make a *Long Life*? If I have anſwered the ends for which I were born, 'tis not *too ſoon* to dye. No Man ever miſcarried as to his Everlaſting Intereſt, becauſe his *Life* was *ſhort*, but *Evil*. He that is prepared for Death, he that dies *in the Lord* hath lived long enough, and ſhould thank God for a *ſpeedy* call to the poſſeſſion of that *Felicity*, which the Holieſt Saints on Earth deſire and breath after. *Gideon* loſt nothing by returning from Victory, *while the Sun was yet high*. He hath fought long enough who hath gained the Victory. If I have wrought but a few hours in a Vineyard, and

and done but a little Service for my Lord and Maſter; and yet am diſmiſt, and rewarded, before the reſt of my Fellow Labourers; ſhall I repine, and think my Lord doth not befriend me? If he hath any farther Service for me, he will prolong my days, and make me diligent, I hope, and *contented*. Otherwiſe I pray he would make me ready to dye, and make me *willing*, and *deſirous* to depart this Life. For to be only *content* to dye, that I may be perfectly Holy, and fully Bleſſed, is methinks too low for a Chriſtian who acts like himſelf, believing the Certainty of his avowed Principles and Hopes, and knowing that *while we are preſent in the Body, we are abſent from the Lord.*

XVI. *The*

XVI.

The contemplation of our approaching Change *may assist us to mortifie the* Lusts *of the* Flesh, *the* Lust *of the* Eyes, *and the* Pride of Life; *to cure* Ambition, *and promote* Contentment.

ALL that is in the World, saith the Apostle, is *the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life.* The Dust and Ashes of our own Mortality duly considered and applied, will help to deaden and extinguish each of these. By *Pride of Life*, we lift up our selves against Heaven, and despise our Maker: by *the lust of the Flesh*, we overlove and indulge the Body, and study to gratifie the sensual Appetite: by *the lust of the Eyes*, our Desires are immoderate after Temporal and External Goods. the thought of our approaching end hath a tendency to oppose and mortifie *these Lusts*; to humble us before God; to take us off from the inordinate love of the Body; and to moderate our Passions to Earthly Things. It may help us against *Pride*, by shewing us the infinite distance between the Eternal self-sufficient God, and

and ſuch poor Duſt as we; who are but of yeſterday, and if he uphold us not, and maintain our Souls in Life, ſhall be laid in the duſt to morrow. It will mind us of his Juſtice againſt *Sin*, the Parent of *Death*, and of all the miſeries of our mortal State; and convince us of our weakneſs to reſiſt his Will, or avoid his Wrath. As to our *fond Affection* to the *Body*, it may inſtruct us, that it deſerves not to be ſo much accounted of; it will open our Eyes to diſcern the Preference of our immortal Souls, and what concerns them, to the intereſt of a periſhing Body. It may convince us, that we are *Cruel* and unkind to our very *Bodies*, by overloving them, becauſe we thereby contribute to their Eternal Sufferings: and ſo teach us to love and uſe our Bodies, as Servants to our Souls in this World; and as expecting to ſhare in Glory with them, after the Reſurrection. It may alſo help to *moderate* our *Deſires* after Earthly Good, and ſo cure the *Luſt of the Eyes*, by letting us ſee the vanity, uncertainty, and ſhort duration of theſe things, and their inſufficiency to make us Happy, and give us true Content.

The Thoughts of an approaching Change may, if any thing will do it,

damp the mirth of the *Luxurious Epicure*, and ſtrike him into a fit of trembling, as did *Belſhazzar's* handwriting on the wall. It may diſcover the diſtraction of living in Pleaſure, and of care to pleaſe the Senſes, and the fleſhly Appetite, when the End is ſo near. It may likewiſe check the folly of *Ambitious Deſigns*: that Men ſhould make ſo much ado to get into ſlippery places, from whence they may ſo eaſily fall. Where being puft up with vain applauſe, they forget themſelves, and their latter end, till their Life, and Glory expire together. Where are now the Great, and Mighty, and Honourable, who have made ſuch a noiſe in the world? What is now the *Difference* between the *Duſt* of an *Alexander* or *Caſar*, and that of their meaneſt Slaves or Captives? Could their Dignities and earthly Glory preſerve any of them, from the ſtroke of Death, or the Judgment of God, or without Repentance, from his condemning Sentence?

Think, *O my Soul!* how little it will ſhortly ſignifie, whether I have been known and honoured among Men or no; any farther than God may be glorified by it. How ſhould it ſuppreſs vain Glory? to think of being *one day* eſteemed, and

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worſhipt, reverenced, and applauded by dying Men, and laid in the Grave *the next*? Let me rather ſeek that Glory and Honour, to which *Immortality* is annext: and labour to be accepted with God, at whoſe Bar I muſt be judged, endeavouring to keep the teſtimony of a good Conſcience; and then it is not much whether I paſs through good Report or evil Report: no contempt, or frowns, or threatnings of Men need then diſcourage me. Tho I ſhould be trampled on by the foot of Pride, while others are happy in a dream for a little while; and it may be have a proſperous paſſage to damnation; I'le rather thank God for delivering me from their Temptations, and giving me the opportunity, and call, to haſten my Preparations for *a better World*. Let God diſpoſe of my Condition here, and *Reputation* too, as beſt ſhall pleaſe his Sovereign Will: only be pleaſed to keep me upright, and to preſerve me from everlaſting Shame and Confuſion of Face, after the general Reſurrection, and final Judgment. Vouchſafe me a Portion now in thine approving Love, and own me for *Thine* at laſt, in the Great and terrible Day of Reckoning; that then I may hear the

Bleſſed *Euge*, and enter into my Lord's Joy!

XVII.

The ſame Argument conſidered farther, as diſſuaſive from Worldlineſs, *and* Earthly mindedneſs: *and as proper to confute the vanity of* long Projects, *and* great Deſigns *for* this *World.*

ARE the Years of my Life but few, and they haſtening to a Period, and may *this* be my laſt? Let me not then greedily covet Riches and abundance, and waſte my little time to ſcrape together large Proviſions, for *many years* to come; when I have no aſſurance to ſee the end of *this*. Is it becoming ſuch a belief, to toyl from day to day, that I may lay up that which I muſt ſo ſoon leave? as if I were to ſpend an *Eternity* here on Earth, and in the mean while neglect *the one thing neceſſary*. Am I not upon the ſhore of Eternity? May not the next Tide carry me off? And ſhall I ſpend my whole Life in Diverſions from the main buſineſs of it? Have I nothing elſe to do, but to gather Shells, (if they were Pearls, the abſurdity were ſtill the ſame,) and pile them upon heaps, till I am ſnatcht away paſt all recovery? Shall I be re-

regardleſs of an Eternal State, and run the hazard of being undone for ever, by ſollicitous care about pretended *Neceſſaries* for a long abode on Earth? Much leſs for *Superfluities*; when I am not certain of the Poſſeſſion, *this one Year*? Shall I magnifie and admire what is ſo ſoon to be parted with? Value my ſelf upon theſe things, ſo as to deſpiſe thoſe that have *leſs*, and envy ſuch as have *more*? and ſuffer my Mind to be diſtempered, and my paſſions immoderate on every Change of theſe things? Tho' I know beſides my own Mortality, that to inforce the Argument, there is a principle of *Corruption* in all theſe things; that our very *Manna* here in a little while will ſtink; and *Bread*, which is the ſtaff of Life, moulder; our richeſt *Garments* wax old, and rot; *Silver* and *Gold* ruſt, and the greateſt *Beauty* wither, and every thing that is *Earthly*, decay and periſh. And ſhall not this teach me to ſit looſe from all ſuch things? Can I imagine, that in my laſt hour it will be *eaſier* to part with *much*, than little? or better in the day of Judgment, to have a great Eſtate to anſwer for than a leſſer one? We read concerning the Patriarch *Abraham*, (who rightly underſtood the tranſitory nature

of Riches, and his own mutable Condition,) that the only *purchaſe* he made with his Riches, was a *Grave*: chuſing to take Poſſeſſion of the Land promiſed him rather by a mark of his parting with it, than of his poſſeſſing it. Did I think oftner and more ſeriouſly, *O my Soul!* of tarrying here but a little while; I ſhould more eaſily be perſwaded, that a *little* of this World were ſufficient to carry me through it. I ſhould conſider more that my *Heaven-born Soul* is made and deſigned for another, an endleſs World: and therefore ſhould not ſo far *forget his own People*, and *Fathers Houſe*; as eagerly to purſue and ſeek what is ſuited only to the *Body*, for a little while, and whereof a little with Contentment will be ſufficient.

The ſame Reflection may be uſeful to contract our Thoughts to *preſent Duty*; that we may not perplex our Minds with *long deſigns* and *Projects*; which if we dye this *this* Year, will come to nothing. Our great Buſineſs in this World is adapted to the little portion of Time, which is allowed us. Not that good Deſigns for the publick Benefit, may not be begun by one, and finiſht by others: or that we are not obliged prudently to pro-

vide

vide for thoſe who ſhall come after us, by attempting many Things of *probable Advantage* to Poſterity. But conſidering the ſhortneſs, and uncertainty of Life, not only ſhould the *moſt neceſſary* Things be *firſt* minded, and not put off by proſecuting ſuch deſigns, as may ſignifie ſomewhat to others, when we are Dead: But we ſhould not now omit that which we may hope to compaſs our ſelves; to begin ſuch things, whoſe accompliſhment muſt depend on the Pleaſure of our Succeſſors. Conſideration and faithful Counſel would in this caſe have prevented the fruitleſs Expence of many Mens Time and Money; which if otherwiſe imployed, might have turned to good account to themſelves and others.

And this heightens our Folly, that while we purſue great Projects in reference to *this* World, and dye without effecting them, our preparations for *Eternity* are neglected; and ſo we are ſuddenly cut off in the midſt of our Folly, and *all our Thoughts periſh*. How eaſily, how ſoon may they do ſo! The difference and diſtance between Death and Life, being no more than that of a *Candle lighted*, from its being *blown*

out; and if it is expoſed to all Winds, how quickly may that happen?

XVIII.

The conſideration of the certain near Approach *of an* Everlaſting State *amplified, and preſt, to inforce an* Holy Life.

IN this World we begin a Year, and quickly come to the end of it; and ere long the little number of our Years, and Days, will be expired. But when Death conveys us into the World of Spirits, the day of *Eternity* ſhall never be cloſed with an Evening. Of how fearful conſequence is that *Death*, by which an *Eternity* muſt be decided! What attention, what ſeriouſneſs, what diligence, what care, doth the diciſion of ſo important a matter call for! ETERNAL! what will be the next word, O my Soul! how much am I concerned to know it! will it be Bleſſedneſs, or Miſery? will it be Life or Death? *This one word* is the Joy of Angels, and the Horror of Devils; the unſpeakable delight of bleſſed Saints, and the confuſion and deſpair of condemned Sinners.

At

At the Creation of the World, *Time* got the ſtart of us, and was *five days* elder then we: but our Immortal Souls ſhall endure beyond the utmoſt limits of Time, and laſt as long as the Everlaſting Father of Spirits, of whoſe duration there is no end. Shall I then exiſt and live, though my Body periſh and ſee corruption? Shall my Soul, my Self exiſt beyond the Grave, in Felicity or Miſery, and that for ever and according to my preſent Actions? What am I then moſt concerned to mind? What am I to chuſe? What am I moſt to fear, to wiſh, to do? What is a ſhadow of Honour and Reputation among dying Men? What are a few drops of fleſhly Pleaſure for a Moment, to eternal Rivers of Pleaſure, at God's right hand? What are the ſufferings of an hour or two, to the pains and anguiſh of Eternity? What can the World, Fleſh, or Devil give me, comparable to eternal Life? What can I ſuffer in the way of Holineſs, that may be ſet in the Balance againſt an Everlaſting Hell? And yet how often, *O my Soul!* how boldly, how unconcernedly, how fooliſhly do I hazard the one, and forfeit the other, for the Sins and Vanities of *this* World! Whereas one proſpect of

Eternity ſhould make every thing that is *Temporal*, appear little in my Eyes; the higheſt elevation of earthly Greatneſs, abundance of Riches, the great Affairs, Buſineſs, and Imployments of the World, Pomp, and Splendor, and Reputation, and all that now flatters the Senſes, and the vanity of Mankind.

Oh that I could but live as believing and expecting *an Eternal State*! as having it in my Eye, managing all my affairs with a viſible reference to it; diſcovering to all the World by my Behaviour and Deportment, that I do in earneſt believe it certain; for be it never ſo *Certain*, if I do not apprehend, and conſider it as *ſuch*, it will no more affect me than a Fable. Neither is it enough to conſider it as *certain*, but as *near*: for the moſt weighty, the moſt terrible things, apprehended as at a great *diſtance*, will little move. Thinking of the long Interval between the advantage of being exempted from ſuch Evils for ſo long a time, will pleaſe me more than ſuch diſtant Calamities will affright.

Let me therefore endeavour to impreſs the conſideration of *Eternity*, *as at hand*, more deeply on my Heart, that I may walk, and live, diſcourſe, and pray, and demean

demean my ſelf in every thing, as *near* an unchangeable State. Am I not convinced that this is certain, from the nature and operations of my Soul, from the reflections of Conſcience, from the Righteouſneſs of God, in his Government of the World, from the preſent unequal diſtributions of Good, and Evil by his Providence, and from the plain and frequent aſſertions of his Revealed Will? I have nothing to object, nothing to reply; but I find a neceſſity of inculcating and urging the conſideration of it in order to its influence. I find it needful to reflect often, how *near* I am to ſuch an endleſs State: that in *one Inſtant*, by Death, I enter upon it: and that *this* Inſtant may be as near me, as my *next Thought*. That the holy Scripture deſcribes the two contrary Conditions after death, (and every Man and Woman in the World ſhall ſhare in one of them) as both Everlaſting: the one, by *Eternal Life, Eternal Glory, an incorruptible Crown, that fadeth not away, an incorruptible Inheritance, an Houſe Eternal in the Heavens, &c.* the other, *by unquenchable Fire, a Priſon whence no eſcape, Eternal Damnation, Everlaſting Burning, everlaſting Puniſhment, everlaſting Deſtruction.*

ction, a Worm that never dies, wrath that is ever to come, blackneſs of darkneſs for ever, ever, &c.

Think, *O my Soul!* that in one of theſe two contrary States, I muſt abide *for ever*; In endleſs Joy, or Sorrow: Bleſſed in the Preſence of God, or for ever baniſhed from it. And whoever thou art that readeſt this, apply it ſeriouſly to thy ſelf, *'tis thine own caſe.* Yea I tell thee from God, that Holineſs of Heart and Life is abſolutely neceſſary to the former, and that without it thou ſhalt never ſee his Face, but be puniſhed with Everlaſting Deſtruction from the Preſence of his Glory.

Is this an unqueſtionable Truth? O let me conſider it, till I feel the Power and Efficacy of ſo important a Principle! let the Impreſſion be deep and laſting! let it pierce and enter into my very Soul! to cool the heats of Luſt, to quench ſenſual and earthly deſires, and to mortifie all inordinate affections to this World; and fix my reſolutions to mind and ſeek Eternal Life with all my Heart!

Theſe are not difficult and perplexed *Niceties*, which wiſe and holy Men differ and diſagree about. They are not Metaphiſical Subtleties, which few can underſtand

ſtand; but the expreſs Word of *God*, and the daily dictates of my own Reaſon and Conſcience, which all Chriſtians, and almoſt all Men in their Wits, except in an hour of great Temptation, confeſs and own; or whether they will or no, are forced to expect and fear, if they are not in a condition, to conſider them with a joyful Hope.

Lord! cure the unbelieving doubts concerning theſe Great things, which notwithſtanding the plaineſt Evidence, the Devil may at any time ſuggeſt! let a confirmed *Faith*, be the *Reality* of what is thus *future*, that my Soul may be influenc'd by them, as it is wont to be by things *preſent*! Let it be the *Subſtance* of things hoped for, and the *Evidence* of things unſeen, and as yet at a diſtance; as if the Day of Judgment were already come, and there were no intermediate Time to paſs between this and that.

O Eternity! Eternity! the more I conſider it, the more unfathomable ſtill I find it. *Unchangeable Bleſſedneſs*, or *remedileſs, endleſs Torments!* An Eternal bliſsful Day, or everlaſting Horror, Darkneſs, and Deſpair! Life or Death, Glory or Deſtruction, to laſt as long as the immutable Living God! None of the

the Patriarchs who lived longeſt, arrived to the period of *a Thouſand years*, which in compariſon of God's Everlaſtingneſs is ſet forth but *as one day*. But ſtrictly conſidered, millions of Years and Ages have *no proportion* with it; becauſe no multiplication of them will amount to *Eternity*. Whereas one hour hath *ſome* proportion to an hundred thouſand years, Becauſe a certain number of Hours will amount to ſo many years. But no number of Years or Ages, never ſo often multiplied, will make up *Eternity*: as no ſubſtraction of Millions of Years will leſſen it: and *entire Eternity* will be ſtill to come, and will ever be to come. When innumerable myriads of years are paſt, Eternity ſhall then ſeem but to *begin*; becauſe when as many more are over, it ſhall be as far from an end. Oh that the thoughts of Eternity may be powerful and prevailing above all others! that I may Judge of every thing by its relation to it, by its influence upon it! Chuſe now, *my Soul*! whether *Everlaſting Joys*, or Miſeries, ſhall be thy Portion: but conſider well, that thine *Eternity* is concerned in thy preſent choice: and that this choice muſt be purſued with ſtedfaſtneſs and conſtancy,

ſtancy, as long as I live: And what are a few years to prepare for an Eternal State? were we obliged to ſpend ſeveral hundred years in ſerious humble preparation for it, with the greateſt ſtrictneſs and ſeverity of Life, during all that Time; it were infinitely leſs than to ſpend an hour or two in preparing for the greateſt Dignity and Imploy on Earth, which can be enjoyed but for a few years at longeſt. For to theſe an hour hath ſome proportion; but an hundred or thouſand years have none, with an *Everlaſting Duration.* Therefore to conſider how many years of toyl, and pains, and diligence, many beſtow on the probable proſpect of ſome Temporal Good, ſhould reprove and ſhame my negligence and remiſneſs in providing for *Eternity.*

XIX. *The*

XIX.

The Punishments *of the* Damned *considered, as* Intolerable, *and* Everlasting, *and as unquestionably* Certain. *What the Reflection upon* Hell-Torments, *may and ought to reach us.*

THE Fear of the Lord is the *Beginning* of Wisdom, the entrance into the way of Life, as it is ordinarily one of the *first* means to awaken the Soul to a serious concern for Eternity: Let me therefore first consider the *Endless Punishment* of the wicked, in the other World, before I enter upon the ravishing Prospect of the Blessedness of Heaven, promised to the Righteous. And with what serious trembling should I think of the Terrors of an *Everlasting Destruction, which our Lord shall be revealed from Heaven to render, to All who know not God, and obey not the Gospel.* When *the wicked shall go away into Everlasting Punishment*; as the Righteous into Life Eternal. The *dreadfulness* of that Punishment, the endless *Duration* of it, joyned to the consideration of its unquestionable *Certainty*, deserves the most attentive Thoughts of every

every Man, who loves his Soul, and would manifeſt he doth ſo, by ſecuring his greateſt Intereſt.

The deſcription of that Miſery, under inſupportable and Eternal Torments, demands more than a tranſient view: becauſe no words can ſufficiently expreſs the Horror of that State. What is it, *O my Soul!* to be baniſhed from the Bleſſed Sight and preſence of God for ever, and all the impreſſions of his holy Image and likeneſs? and to know that this is the fruit of my own choice, that I loſt it by my own Fault and Folly; that I deſerved to loſe it; that the Sentence is as Juſt, as it is irrecoverable? Who can fully imagine the diſmal deſpair of a condemned Sinner, under this anguiſh of a *Guilty ſelf-accuſing Mind*? while under the ſtroke of God's Almighty revenging Juſtice, with a diſtincter view and knowledge than now, of God and his Excellencies, of himſelf and his own vileneſs and malignity, which muſt greatly increaſe his rage and Torment. Add to this, his being inraged by the accuſations and cries of wicked *Acquaintance*, and *Relations*; and his being mockt, and inſulted over, and tortured, by malicious damned *Spirits*; with

with a clear understanding of that glorious Felicity he despised, refused, and forfeited; with a deep sense of his former *Madness* in preferring the sinful Pleasures and Advantages of this World; and this after so many warnings, and invitations, and calls from God, to have prevented it; never to be diverted one Moment from the consideration, sense and feeling of his Misery, and the duration of it; to have all his *Passions* let loose with the greatest violence, and nothing to satisfie them; and continually to preserve an *Hell* of wickedness and Horror *in himself*; and to endure the reproaches, convictions, regrets, and stinging Reflections of Conscience, *the gnawing Worm, which shall never dye*; who can conceive the unspeakable misery of such an accursed State? *So great Calamity*, and yet *Everlasting*! How long doth one Day or Night now seem, to a Man under some violent racking *Pain*, in any one part of his Body, tho' he be under the means for Cure, and have his Friends about him to pity, comfort, assist him, with the hopes of Ease in a little while, and the certain knowledge that it cannot last long? Oh what then will be the dismal state of tormented

mented (*b*) Sinners in *Hell!* How infinitely muſt it exceed the moſt terrible Idea we can now frame of it! to languiſh out a long Eternity in that Gulph of Darkneſs and Deſpair, under unpitied intolerable Torments, without Intermiſſion, or hope of End! Miſeries without meaſure! Judgment without Mercy! Pains and Sorrows intenſe, and yet endleſs! without the leaſt ſuccour or relief, relaxation or remedy, diminution or change! without a drop of Comfort, without a moments Reſt, without the ſmalleſt beam of Light, or the leaſt glimmering of Hope! Perpetually dying, and never dead! under *unſufferable Wrath*, which yet will be for ever *Wrath to come*! ſeeking Death, and never able to find it, but Eternally to endure all that Calamity, which the Conjunction of Death and Life together can render dreadful! What Groans and Cries will theſe Thoughts, and theſe ſufferings wring from their Hearts? But no refuge will then be found, no excuſes admitted, no Prayers, no entreaties will then prevail no Tears move Pity. *He that made them,*

(*b*) *Vide Mr. Baxter's Saints Reſt, part* 2. *chap.* 4.

will

will ſhew them no Mercy, and he that formed them, will ſhew them no favour. 'Tis *Never, Never* that is the killing word that breaks the Heart of thoſe hopeleſs Priſoners in the place of Torment. When once deliver'd over to that Priſon of Gods Wrath, they ſhall no longer be priſoners of Hope. Judgment ſhall be brought forth unto final victory: and the Redemption of the Soul ſhall ceaſe for ever.

The vain hopes of Sinners ſhall then be ended in eternal deſperation: Hell will be full of thoſe, who did once *hope* they ſhould never come there, and full of thoſe who *deſpair* of deliverance from thence; but ſhall ſuffer exquiſite Pains that cannot be numbred, or meaſured, or endured, but that every *Minute* of an hour will ſeem an whole Year, and yet muſt *eternally* be endured by miſerable Sinners, who will not be wiſe in time to prevent ſuch an intolerable Portion. Let me therefore, *O my Soul*, deſcend into *Hell* by Meditation whilſt I live, that I may not deſcend thither when I dye, and be ſhut up for ever in that Priſon, the place of endleſs Torment.

Might we but ſuppoſe, that one of thoſe Miſerable Souls did let fall but

one

one Tear, in an *hundred thouſand* years; and if after he had by this means wept ſo much, as that his Tears would equal the *drops* of water in the whole *Sea*, his Miſery ſhould have an *end*; this were *Hope*, this were *Comfort*. But alas! after that Period, his Miſery will be *as far* from an end, as when he *firſt* began to feel it. It will then be but *the Beginning of Sorrows*, which will *never, never, never* End.

Think, *O my Soul*, that this is the Portion of the Sinners Cup; this is the wages of *Sin*, and the certain doom of final Impenitence and Unbelief. 'Tis no politick Cheat, or melancholy dream, but the expreſs repeated word of God, and Chriſt, the holy Prophets and Apoſtles, and the voice of *Reaſon* too, ſuppoſing but the Immortality of the Soul, and the power of ſelf-Reflection, the puniſhment of Sinners muſt needs be *Everlaſting*, as carrying continually an Hell within them; unleſs God work a miracle to prevent it, which there is no ground to imagine he will, or ſhadow of reaſon why he ſhould. God hath pawn'd his *Truth*, and his (*i*) *Eternity*, to

(*i*) *Deut.* 32. *v.* 40, 41.

execute

execute this Sentence of his threatned wrath. He is a God of infinite *Mercy*, 'tis true; but he hath told us how far his Mercy ſhall extend. He will not exerciſe *one Attribute* to the diſhonour and the diſparagement of the reſt. That obſtinate and impenitent Sinners, ſhall thus periſh, is not becauſe the goodneſs and mercy of God are not infinite, but becauſe his other Perfections are ſo, *viz.* His Holineſs, Juſtice, Truth, Soveraignty, and Wiſdom. Was it Wiſdom and Goodneſs to annex ſuch a Penalty to the violation of his Law; and can it be inconſiſtent with them, to inflict his threatned wrath? Shall we ſuppoſe God to uphold his Dominion and Government by a Falſhood? to keep the World in awe by the menaces of ſuch Puniſhments, as ſhall no where, never be executed? Is it unlikely, that God ſhould exerciſe ſo much ſeverity? and is it not as improbable, that his repeated Word and Oath ſhould prove falſe? Is it not a righteous thing with God, as the Governour of the World, thus to puniſh the obſtinate Deſpiſers of his Grace? who ſlighted his Authority, diſobeyed his Law, affronted his Soveraignty, derided his Power, denied his Truth, contradicted

tradicted his Holineſs, and joyned Iſſue with the Devil, to pull him from his Throne; who abuſed his Patience and Long-ſuffering, and ſcorned all his threatnings; who thruſt away their own Happineſs, and would not take warning; who burſt all his bands aſunder, and broke through all obſtructions; and would not be ſtopt in their courſe of Vanity and Folly, or ſo much as conſider their danger; who rejected his calls to Repentance, and refuſed his Mercy, when it was offered; and preferred a Luſt before his favour, and the Pleaſures and Profits of this World before the Heavenly Glory; and notwithſtanding all the methods of his Grace, and the checks of his Providence, and of their own Conſcience, they will go on, they *will Dye?* Let me, *O my Soul!* adore the *Soveraign Juſtice* of God in all his Judgments; and tremble at the threatnings of that *Eternal Wrath*, which ſo few conſider or believe, till 'tis too late. Let the foreſight and the fear of ſuch an intollerable endleſs Puniſhment, be a means to ſave me from it! Let me herein read the evil of Sin, and learn to abhor and avoid it. Let me pity, and warn, and counſel, and pray for thoſe of my Relations and Acquaintance,

Acquaintance, who live in Sin, and run the hazard of this Eternal Ruin. Let me not envy the fooliſh Mirth, and momentany Proſperity of the Wicked, whoſe preſent joy muſt ere long expire, and an everlaſting Deſtruction ſucceed in its room. (k) *How ſhort is the Joy of the Hypocrite! and the triumph of the Wicked is but for a Moment.* Let me fear and dread every thing, that leads to this diſmal iſſue, and improve every thing that may help me to eſcape it. And by conſequence, let me leſs value all the Good and Evil of this preſent Life; judge of all things by this light; be patient under temporal Calamities, and thank God that it is not *Hell*; and thank him more, that preſent ſufferings do help to ſave me from Eternal ones.

Whatever I can ſuffer in *this* World, let my condition be never ſo dark and ſad and afflicted, it is not, it cannot be ſuch, but that *every one* of the *Damned* would think it an infinite Happineſs to exchange with me, and be as I am. Let me think of thoſe exquiſite and eternal Flames, to cure my *Impatience* under the ſharpeſt Trials and Afflictions I may now ſuffer.

(k) *Job.* 20. ch. 4. 5.

Did

Did I believingly conſider *an Everlaſting Hell* *, I ſhould not think much of any thing that is required to prevent it. The ſevereſt exerciſes of Religion, the ſtricteſt Temperance, the niceſt Chaſtity, the largeſt Charity, the greateſt Self-denial, all the hardſhips of Repentance and Mortification, and continuance therein to the Death, tho for many years more than I am like to live, would be reckon'd *eaſie*, as well as *juſt*, if ſet in the ballance againſt the Eternal Miſchiefs of the Damned.

What will not men do and ſuffer to prevent a *Temporal* Death? They will endure a painful courſe of Phyſick; tear out their very bowels, by Purges and Vomits: and are content to be cut and ſcarrified, and to ſuffer any thing almoſt to ſave their lives: But how little will they do to be ſaved from the wrath to come! One would think, they ſhould have no Reſt, or Peace, or be able to live a quiet hour, till they had made ſome Proviſion againſt the hazard of this *Eternal Deſtruction:* and look upon all men as their Friends, or Enemies, according to the help, or hindrance, they received from them, in reference to it. But the direct

*] *Qui non expergiſcitur ad hæc Tonitrua, jam non dormit, ſed mortuus eſt.* S. Auguſtin.

Contrary is every where apparent. Men are careleſs and ſecure, jovial and merry in the way that leads to Hell; and eſteem, and love, and chuſe that Company that will help to bring them to this place of torment: Yea, ſuch is their ſtupidity, and ſtrange perverſeneſs, that they will not ſuffer to be *told* of their *Danger*. If you tell them, that by ſuch a Courſe, or ſuch an Action, they will loſe ſo much Money, or their Lives will be in danger; they reckon it an obligation, will take it kindly, and return you thanks: But when they are told, by ſuch Courſes and Actions they will loſe their Souls, and the Favour of God, and the Hopes of Heaven, and muſt Periſh *for ever*; this they will not receive, they deſpiſe the meſſage, and ſcorn and hate the Meſſenger; are diſpleaſed and angry at ſuch faithfulneſs.

O bleſs the Lord, O my Soul! for any *good hope through Grace*, of eſcaping this Intolerable and Endleſs Miſery. *And let all that is within me bleſs his holy Name.* I have *deſerved* the ſame endleſs and unſupportable wrath, which Thouſands are now under, and ſhall be under to all Eternity; but he did not ſuffer me to fall into it. To be delivered out of thoſe Torments after many years miſery, would be thought an admirable,

rable, unſpeakable *kindneſs*; And is it not a *greater favour* never to be thrown into *Hell*, which I have ſo often deſerved? How grateful would a damned perſon be, to be freed from thoſe Flames, and plac'd in the ſame condition I now am in? What a Life of ſerious, ſelf-denying obedience would he lead? And hath not God done *more* for me? Am I not *more indebted* to his Goodneſs? He hath kept me out of *Hell*, and offers me the Heavenly Glory upon reaſonable, honourable, and eaſie Terms. Bleſſed be God, I may *yet* eſcape the wrath to come.

Let me heartily compaſſionate the deluſion of thoſe multitudes of *deceived*, periſhing Souls, whoſe eyes are blinded by the God of this world; who will not believe it, till they are convinc'd by the light of that Fire which ſhall never be extinguiſht. Yea, when I read, or hear of Ten or Twenty thouſand men ſlain in a War, (whether of *Infidels* or *Chriſtians*) let me think of it, with other apprehenſions than formerly I was wont to do. Conſidering that many, it may be, the moſt of theſe ſhall never have any Comfort or Mercy more; fearing leſt the ſame Sword or Bullet that gave them their mortal wound, hath fixt them under God's *Everlaſting*

Wrath; and that by dying, they are undone for ever. In very many other caſes, the Faith of *this Article* would rectify my Opinion, and direct my Actions, if ſeriouſly conſidered and improved. This would make me think of *Death* under another Notion, than 'tis commonly conſidered. For without the conſideration of *Hell* annexed to it, it is not ſo very formidable, but that Heathens have been able to deſpiſe it. The moſt contrary Sects among them, on different grounds have been able to do it; but conſider *Death* as a paſſage to Eternal miſery, as the Gate of Hell, as the end of all Comfort to a wicked Man, and the beginning of an endleſs Calamity, and nothing can be imagined more *dreadful* to a Guilty unholy Soul. Some of my *Acquaintance*, it may be, who died this laſt year, are now among thoſe Hopeleſs, Deſpairing Wretches, who expect the final Judgment of God, to conſummate their inſupportable Miſery. If they were permitted to come, and tell us what they ſuffer, and what they know; what a terrible conſuming Fire God is; what Vanity, Luſt and Folly, brought them to this place of Torment; what diligence they would adviſe us to, while in a State of Hope, to prevent the like; if

we

we have any love and and kindneſs for our ſelves, any Bowels of Compaſſion to our own Souls; what a Change do we think it would work upon us? But if we will nor *hear* Moſes *and the Prophets*, *Chriſt*, *and his Apoſtles*, neither ſhould we believe, tho one came from the Dead.

XX.

The Eternal Bleſſedneſs of HEAVEN *conſidered, as the Perfection of* Holineſs, *to quicken our deſires and endeavours after greater* Meetneſs *to poſſeſs it.*

DOth one year after another haſten me to the end of Time? And doth the Bleſſedneſs of Eternity depend on the Communications I now receive from God? On the Preparations I now make, and the Meetneſs I can now attain for Eternal Felicity in the Preſence of my God and Saviour? O, with what Intenſeneſs of mind, ſhould I now proſecute that glorious Object! with what unwearied diligence ſhould I run the race that is ſet before me, leſt I fall ſhort of the Incorruptible Crown of Life? How ſhould every thing be undervalued and rejected, that would divert, retard, or hinder me from purſuing this

end? *Lord!* be not a ſtranger to my Soul in this diſtant Wilderneſs ſtate! Let me ſee more of thy Light! be transform'd more into thine Image! experience more of thy Love! feel more of thy vital Preſence, and quickening Spirit! let the Divine Life in my Soul be more powerful! and the Characters of thy Likeneſs be more legibly ſtampt upon it! by the daily exerciſe of Faith, and Hope, and holy Affections, carry me through this World! till my Pilgrim ſtate be over, and thou haſt brought me to *perfect Everlaſting Holineſs!* And let the believing fore-thoughts of it, fill all the Powers of my Soul with Joy, and Wonder, Deſire and Love!

Give me, *Lord!* to think a right of the Heavenly Glory; as a confirmed State of poſitive perfect *Holineſs*; of heavenly Light, Love, Liberty and Joy; with the ſatisfying Viſion of God, in the Face of Chriſt, and his impreſſed Likeneſs; dwelling for ever in the direct and ſteady view of his transforming Glory; with compleat conformity of the Soul to Eternal Goodneſs, Truth and Love, as its Perfection; eſteeming nothing, deſiring nothing but that God and Chriſt may be glorified with an intire Subjection to his Will, adherence to him; Reſt and Confidence in him, ſwallowed

lowed up in the Love, Admiration, and Praiſe of God, and our Lord Jeſus, living in joyful repeated Acts of Subjection, Adoration, and acknowledg'd Dependance; raviſht to behold the Glory of God, in the Face of Chriſt, to ſee his bleſſed Image perfect in every one of the Saints, *&c.* When all the preſent Blindneſs of our Minds, the Errors of our Judgment, the Perverſneſs of our Will, the Diſorder and Rebellion of our Paſſions, the remaining Averſation from God, and Diſaffection to him, which in this World we complain of, ſhall all be done away: The Fleſh ſhall no more Luſt againſt the Spirit; or the Law in our Members againſt the Law of our Minds; but an everlaſting Tranquility and holy Peace take place; a *Peace* which paſſeth all underſtanding, without any outward Moleſtation, or inward cauſe of Diſquiet.

Our corrupted Nature ſhall no more caſt forth Mire and Dirt as now; we ſhall have no more vain or wicked Thoughts, no more ſinful Fears, or fooliſh Hopes; unbecoming Heats, unruly Deſires, ſenſual Inclinations, earthly Affections, feeble, ſlothful, ſpiritleſs Duties, dead and heartleſs Prayers, cold Thankſgivings, *&c.* but as we ſhall then know God without Error,

and ſee our Lord Jeſus face to face, ſo we ſhall love him without reſerve, more than now we can think, and ſerve him without Dulneſs and Diſtraction, and Praiſe him without Wearineſs; the ſpiritual Actings of our Souls ſhall have no allay of Droſs. And thus ſhall we be with him, and admire and injoy him, *without end.*

Thus when *Death is ſwallowed up in victory*; and what was imperfect is done away, and what was Corruptible and Mortal, hath put on Immortality; *God in Chriſt ſhall be All in All:* And when it is truly and perfectly ſo, *Then it is Heaven.* The bleſſedneſs whereof is unconceivable. A *Bleſſed* Perſon is not expreſt in the ſingular Number by the *Hebrews*, but in the abſtract, and in the Plural. *Beatitudes* inſtead of *Bleſſed*, becauſe the Bleſſings are as many and great, as they have Powers and Capacities to partake of Bleſſedneſs; ſo will it be in *Heaven.* A Word, tho commonly uſed as little underſtood, as *Holineſs*; which is one of the greateſt Myſteries in the World. But will hereafter be fully and delightfully underſtood by the Bleſſed Saints; as the Malignity and intrinſick Evil of *Sin* ſhall be, by the damned Spirits.

Oh

Oh, that I might now feel more of this Heavenly Life, begun and carried on in my Soul, by a farther Participation of his holy Image, and Conformity to his Will! by more vital Effects of his indwelling Spirit in my Soul, forming it to be a Temple to himself, for his own delightful Residence! that forgetting that, which I have received, I may still be Covetous, and desirous of more; forgetting what I have attain'd, I may press on with an holy Eagerness and Fervency towards the Mark!

When I seriously examine my own heart, had I nothing else to prove the weakness of my Grace, and the sinful remainders of Unbelief, but the low desires, and few comfortable Thoughts, the seldom joyful prospect of this Blessed State; how sad an Evidence were it of my low attainments, that I breathe with no more Impatience, after that *Blessed, Holy Rest*, in the injoyment of God and Christ; and labour no more in preparing for it? When we profess to believe that all the Desires of our Souls shall be fix'd on *Him*, and filled with *Him*, as our *Infinite* and *Supreme Good*; and all the Expectations of Faith and Hope, swallowed up in endless Admiration, Gratitude and Joy; being fully satisfied, and at Rest in the Presence and Vision of God; without

the leaſt Inclination or Deſire of Change. And by conſequence,

There will be no need of *Novelty*, as now, to give a reliſh to our Happineſs. All Happineſs in this World is by comparing a Man's preſent Condition, with his paſt, or with that of ſome Inferiors. But the Intrinſick Good, Felicity, and Joy of Heaven, will need no ſuch *Foil* to ſet it off; no ſuch Compariſon to make it prized. The Bleſſed Spirits will never loſe the lively Senſe of that low and miſerable Condition, from which they were raiſed to ſo great a Glory; and ſo will ever equally rejoyce in the Happineſs of their Tranſlation and wonderful Change. And what was at *firſt* delightful, will *for ever* be ſo; and not be diſdain'd or leſſen'd by a continuance; as it happens in this World, from the Emptineſs, Shallowneſs, and Vanity of the Creature. An Affectation of *Variety*, and deſire of *Change*, proceeding always from a Senſe of *Want*. But Holy Souls ſhall never be weary of ſeeing, loving and injoying God; his bleſſed Preſence will afford us undecaying and endleſs Satisfaction; Pleaſure, never to be interrupted, or abated, and never to ceaſe. The bleſſed *Object* is abſolutely *Infinite*, and ſo will be always *new* to a finite underſtanding; and

continual

continual freſh Communications from his infinite fulneſs, muſt needs make our ſubjective Happineſs to be always *new*, and eternally ſuch.

Let me by ſuch Thoughts quicken and excite my diligent Endeavours, after a greater meetneſs to injoy ſo great a Bliſs. And to that end, conſider whether any of thoſe happy Souls, who have finiſht their Courſe, and obtained the Prize, do now regret their utmoſt Diligence, Patience, and Perſeverance, during their ſhort abode here, to ſecure the Bleſſedneſs of an endleſs Life: *No, no*, they are far from repenting the Time they ſpent, the Trouble they were at, the Care they uſed, the Difficulties they met with, the Sufferings they indured; to conflict with the World, and the Fleſh, to reſiſt Temptation, to watch over their Hearts, and Words, and Ways, to work out their Salvation, to pleaſe God, and be faithful to him, *&c.* They find to their unſpeakable Comfort, and everlaſting Joy, that *Heaven* makes amends for *all* they could do or ſuffer in order to their coming *thither*. Yea, they find that they were not Diligent, and Humble, and Patient, and Circumſpect enough. That they did not love God, and ſeek his Glory, redeem their Time, and improve all their Talents

Talents and Opportunities of doing and receiving Good, and give up themſelves intirely to prepare for Heaven, to that degree they ſhould have done. They find by the tranſcendency of the bleſſed Recompence, that it deſerved infinitely *more* than the moſt Active, Zealous Chriſtian upon Earth did ever do, in order to it.

Lord! quicken my Reſolutions and Endeavours by ſuch thoughts as theſe? Inſpire my ſluggiſh, carnal Heart, with holy Light, and Life, and Zeal, and Fervour! that *looking to the things which are not ſeen, which are Eternal;* I may * *lay up a good Foundation againſt the Time to come, and ſo lay hold of eternal Life!*

But *alas!* How much have I neglected the great Duty of Holy *Meditation?* How little skill and expetience have I in it? How taſtleſs and inſipid oftentimes are my Thoughts of God! how confuſed and unſteady! how little Pleaſure or Advantage have I by contemplating his higheſt Excellencies? Yet methinks, could I but retain the ſame awakened, lively thoughts of Heaven, and Eternal Life, which *ſometimes* I have had; might I continually feel the

* 1 Tim. 1, 19.

ſweet

ſweet and ſacred Influence, as for a *little ſeaſon* I have ſometimes felt it; how little, how very a *Nothing*, would all *this World* be to me! how comparatively weak, its ſtrongeſt and moſt alluring Snares, to draw me off from God! with what an unſhaken mind could I refuſe and reſiſt 'em! with what an unconcerned *indifference* could I look upon all its moſt charming Glory!

Could I maintain ſuch a frame of Spirit, as I have ſometimes had for a little while, in the ſerious Contemplation of Divine Myſteries, in Fervent Prayers, and other Solemn Duties of Religion; when the acts of Faith were ſtrong and lively, my Heart ſet on fire with love to God, and holy breathings after him; admiring his matchleſs Grace to fallen Sinners, (and to my Soul in particular) when he brought me to the very Suburbs of Heaven, (tho *alas!* how *ſeldom!*) by the delightful Thought of what the Bleſſed Spirits above injoy, in being where Chriſt is, and beholding his Glory; when I was ready to ſay within my ſelf, *'Tis good to be here; this is no other than the Gate of Heaven; Oh, when ſhall Mortality be ſwallowed up of Life!* But when I thought at any time to fix and ſettle in ſuch ſweet Contemplations, how quickly did

did my lazy backward Heart fly-off! how ſoon did the flame decay and dye away! how ſoon did I find my ſelf fallen down to Earth again! ſunk down from the Boſom of my Lord, preſently forgot my ſelf and Heaven, to dwell among the Pots, and imbrace a Dunghill! 'Twas not on my own Wings, *O Lord!* that I ſoared ſo high; but I hope by the breathings of that holy Spirit of Light and Love, who bloweth when, and where, and how long he liſteth. Who gave me at any time any ſuch *firſt fruits of the Spirit*; who convinc't me of the Certainty of the Heavenly Inheritance, by a lively believing foreſight of it; who made me earneſtly deſire the Wings of a Dove to be gone, and appear before God in *Sion*; made me Pant and Groan to be delivered, and to be with God and Chriſt, with inexpreſſible Deſire and Joy, unconceivably mixt with Sighs and Groans. *O my God!* let not this experience be only ſuch a *Taſte* of the Powers of the World to come, as is conſiſtent with *final Apoſtacy!* only the ſeeming Zeal of the ſtony Ground! the rapturous Joy of an Hypocrite! from the Power of Imagination, and a heated Fancy; from the workings of meer natural Self-love; upon miſtaken apprehenſions of God, and a falſe Opinion of Heaven; but

but by the holy effects, let me be assured of the Cause and Principle; that it was of God!

Teach me from the sweetness of a Spiritual Communion with God *now* in any of his appointed Ordinances, to argue to my self what that most ravishing Satisfaction will be, that the Enjoyment of God in Heaven will afford the Soul. Our Holiness is now imperfect, to what it shall be: and therefore our Consolation, Peace and Joy, is but in part, and incomparably less than we are assured it will be, when we shall be admitted to behold the *Glory* of the Lord. 'Tis now at most, but as the Break of Day, to the Lustre of the Meridian Sun. But if in this low imperfect State, we can sometimes obtain so near a View of his Glory, and feel such sweet Communications of his Grace; how much more of this Consolation and Joy is reserved to Heaven? If in this Pilgrim State, the Gifts and Graces, and Comforts of the Holy Spirit are so refreshing: O! what hath God prepared beyond the Grave, for those who love him? If now he sometimes shed abroad his love in our Heart, after such a manner; how much better shall I love him, and feel the influence, and evidence of his Love to me, when I shall be with him, and see him

him Face to Face? If the apprehenſions of this future Bleſſedneſs, do now encourage, raiſe, and animate my drooping Soul; O, what ſhall I know and ſee? And how ſhall I rejoyce, when the Vail is removed? If a Sacramental Communion with God and Jeſus Chriſt, be ſometimes ſo ſweet, and ſo affecting; what will the Bleſſed Communion with God, and all his Saints *above* amount to! when I ſhall ſit down with all the Children of God, in the Preſence of the Bridegroom, at the laſt great Supper of the Lamb in Glory! If the *Earneſt* of our Inheritance be ſo reviving, what will be the full Poſſeſſion of it? If the Hopes of that glorious Day, by holy Meditation, be ſo tranſporting; what will be the end of our Faith and Hope? If a Grape or two in the Wilderneſs, be ſuch a Cordial; what will be the whole Vintage in the Land of Promiſe?

Shall I after all this, forget my own Experience, and run from God and Heaven, to imbrace or ſeek a periſhing Toy? Shall I hide my ſelf with *Saul*, among the Stuff and Lumber of this World, when God is calling me to a *Glorious Crown*? Art thou, *O my Soul!* a King's Son, an Heir of Heaven, an expectant of ſuch great Felicity, and yet ſtoop ſo low? Hope for Heaven,

and

and yet graſp this Earth, and hug the vain Appearances of earthly Good? Hope to be *like to God*; (and oh how Glorious an Hope is that!) to partake of his Image, and live Eternally with him; and yet be ſollicitous, anxious, and diſquieted about Honour and Money, and a Temporal Intereſt? And mightily concerned about the momentany Gratifications of the Fleſh, and the Injoyments of this World? Art thou a Pilgrim and Stranger here, and travelling home to the Heavenly Country, and yet eager and paſſionate about earthly Things? Should an Heart that is ſet upon Heaven, (or may be ſo, and ought to be ſo) ſhould it burn with ſuch *Kitchin*, ſuch common *Fire*? And neglect the unconceivable Riches and Pleaſures, and immortal Honours of the other Life, and the dawnings of that Glory upon my Soul, by the foretaſts of it in this? How great is the diſproportion between the Heavens and the Earth? How vaſt the Circumference of the one, and how ſmall a Point the other? How many thouſand Miles doth the Sun travel in the Heavens, while it paſſeth but one Inch upon a Dial? Oh that my Affections were carried to *heavenly* Things, with a ſwiftneſs ſomewhat anſwerable to the glorious Object. And let their motion to

earthly

earthly Things be rather ſlow and inſenſible, like that of the Sun on a Dial. Since I profeſs to believe, and wait for the heavenly Glory, ſhould I not live, as ſeeking ſuch things, as expecting ſuch a Glory? And are careleſs and indifferent Thoughts, ſleepy heartleſs Prayers, faint and weak Endeavours, becoming in ſuch a caſe? Shall I not mend my Pace, and double my Diligence in my preparatory Work? When I can believingly foreſee the bleſſed Recompence; waiting for that *Everlaſting Light* of the Sun of Righteouſneſs, which no Eclipſe ſhall ever darken or obſcure; for that Eternal Glorious Day, which ſhall never be cloſed with an Evening. When I ſhall ſee the Face of God in Chriſt, and be like him, participate more of his Image, reſt in his Love, and dwell for ever in the Light of his Countenance, according to the Prayer and Promiſe of my Bleſſed Saviour.

And ought not ſuch a proſpect to ſweeten the Bitterneſs of all our intermediate Sufferings? We are now oftentimes in Heavineſs and Sorrow; but Eternity will be enough for an interrupted Joy. When we ſhall exchange all our Troubles for everlaſting Reſt, our Priſons for perfect Liberty, our Poverty for the Riches of God; Darkneſs

neſs for Light; diſcord for Love; Deformity for Beauty; our Weakneſſes and preſent Languiſhings, for Strength and Vigor; Folly for Wiſdom; Diſgrace for Glory; Sickneſs and Pain for eternal Eaſe and Health; the Animal for the Angelical Life; Imperfection and Pollution for conſummate Holineſs; our Sighs, and Tears, and Sorrows, and Complaints, for triumphant Everlaſting Praiſe; our Loſſes, Affronts, Diſappointments, Perplexities, Fears, Groans, and Death, for Crowns and Scepters, Hymns and Hallelujahs, Light and Life, and Bliſs unutterable; and ſuch great things as are fit for us to *hope*, but too great to be now particularly underſtood and talkt of; while *we know but in part, and ſee through a Glaſs darkly*; yea, it ſeems as if it were not lawful to utter 'em, 2 *Cor.* 12. 4. and now they cannot be expreſt, or fully known; *for Eye hath not ſeen, or Ear heard, or can it enter into the Heart of man to conceive that prepared Glory.*

XXI.

XXI.

A devout Meditation upon the 73. Pſalm 25. Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth that I deſire beſides thee.

WHat is there in Heaven or in Earth, *O Lord!* but thy Preſence to be valued, loved, deſired, choſen, ſought, or delighted in? There is nothing in either World deſirable *without Thee*, nothing certainly *above Thee*, nothing in Compariſon *with Thee*. In *Thee* alone I truſt; on *Thee* I depend; in *Thee* I repoſe my Confidence and Hope; from *Thee* I expect all my Felicity and Salvation. What ever I can loſe, yet with the continuance of *thy Favour*, which is my Life, I have ſtill *Enough*. With that I am *Rich*, without it I am *Poor* and *Miſerable*. And if I want the Love of God, all that Heaven and Earth can give beſides, will not make me Happy. In *Thee*, therefore, I would terminate all my Affections, all my Devotions! There is nothing of *Heaven* to be had on *Earth*, but in thy Favour, Image and Love, and the reviving Senſe of it. And all the *Heaven* I expect *hereafter*, 'tis in the more

more full and immediate Communications of theſe in thy bleſſed Preſence. I can *deſire* nothing upon *Earth*; I can *injoy* nothing in *Heaven*, but *Thee!* both here and there, thou *art*, and *ſhalt ever be* my all-ſufficient ſatisfactory Portion, *my Everlaſting All!* None elſe can be the *Portion of my Soul.* Nothing elſe can fill up all its Wants, anſwer all its Cravings, be ſuited to all its Capacities, appeaſe and charm all its reſtleſs Motions, and give complacence to all its Deſires, and be the proper Object of all its *Affections.*

What is there elſe can juſtly claim my *Love*, or pretend to my ſupreme Affection in compariſon with *God?* Thou art alone the proper Center of it. Thine infinite and incomparable Excellencies, (who art *Love it ſelf*) deſerve my choiceſt Love; and thy numberleſs Mercies and Benefits, challenge it as a juſt Debt; as a piece of Homage due from all, and of ſpecial Gratitude alſo from me. Oh that I could love thee *above all things!* who alone art worthy of all my Love! O that *Divine Love* might be the ruling Principle within me! to inſpire all my Thoughts, to regulate all my deſires, to ſet all the Powers of my Soul on Work! O that it might take the full Poſſeſſion of my Heart, and ſo animate

and

and order all my Actions to please him, whom my Soul loveth! If as yet I cannot say with thine Apostle, *Lord! thou that knowest all things, thou knowest that I Love thee.* Yet I can say, *Lord, thou knowest that I would Love thee!* Thou hast provided for our Happiness, by that first and great Command of loving thee with all our Hearts, and Souls, and Strength. But alas! how backward is my sluggish carnal Heart, to this delightful Exercise? Tho I have so oft been told, that *God is Love*, and that *he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* O shed abroad thy Love into my Soul! that I may feel the vital Power and Influence of it, and live continually in the *Love* of God, and that nothing may ever be able to separate me from it.

Whom have I in Heaven or Earth, *to Hope in*, but *Thee?* I expect more from Creatures, than they can or will perform; but God can do for me more abundantly than I can ask or think; exceed my largest thoughts, out-strip my highest Expectations. And no man was ever disappointed, who made *Thee* his *Hope.* When I meet with Crosses, and Wrongs, Unfaithfulness, Contempt, Hatred, and Persecution from Men, I need not wonder; I was never told by God, it would be otherwise

wiſe here. Did I look for leſs from Creatures, and expect more from God; Did I reckon this World to be a ſtate of Trial, and not a place of Reſt and Satisfaction; My Faith and my Deſires would be ſtronger with reſpect to God and Heaven; and temporal Calamities and Diſappointments leſs afflictive and vexatious.

And what is there, *O Lord!* in Heaven, or in Earth, my Soul can *deſire* beſides *Thee?* Is there any thing deſirable, but as it is thine, of thee, and from thee? And bears ſome Impreſſion of thine Excellence, or brings ſome Intimation of thy Love? And what can I reaſonably deſire; what that is worth deſiring, or having, but thou art able to *be*, and *do*, and *give?*

In whom, or what, ſhall I *Rejoyce*, but in *Thee*, O Lord! ſhall I ſolace my ſelf in tranſitory Goods, that ſlip between my Fingers, and periſh in the Uſing? or reliſh carnal Joys, which pollute and debaſe the Soul? When I may and ought to *Rejoyce in Thee* at all Times, as the only Source of perfect Everlaſting Joy. Let me then ſtir up my drooping, deſponding, unbelieving Heart, to rejoyce in God; who takes Pleaſure in the chearful Service and

and Obedience of his Children; who delighteth in thoſe, who delight in him. Is not * *Delighting in God*, a moſt eſſential, vital part of Religion? Should it not be my conſtant Frame? Hath not God ſufficiently provided, that it may be ſo? Can I ſay and believe, that God is the Portion of my Soul; that *he is my God*, and I hope to live with him *for ever*, and not *Rejoyce?* Or can I conſider the Grace of the new Covenant, the matchleſs Love of Chriſt, and the precious Promiſes of the Goſpel, and not ſee reaſon to *Rejoyce?* Yea, doth my Soul love God, and endeavour to pleaſe him; and is not the very Act and Exerciſe of holy Love, mixt with unſpeakable ſweetneſs?

Whom is there in *Heaven*, or in *Earth*, or *Hell*, that I ought to *Fear*, but *Thee?* Who haſt a negative Voice in all the Deſigns of Men and Devils; an hook in their Noſtrils; a Bridle in their Mouths; to make them fulfil thy Pleaſure, and in every thing accompliſh thy Soveraign Decree.

Is there any other, in whom I may repoſe my *Truſt*, but in *Thee*, O Lord! the Rock of Ages? The might of thy Power,

* *Vid. Mr.* Howe, *Of Delighting in God.*

the

the unſearchableneſs of thy Wiſdom, the righteouſneſs of thy Nature, the ſtability of thy Truth, the riches of thy Grace, and the immutability of thy Promiſe, are a ſure foundation, for my Soul to truſt to, and rely upon. Thy word ſtands firm for ever: and the *Truth* of thine ability, and readineſs to *help*, in every time of need, *endures the ſame throughout all Generations.* At all times, and in all places, my ſoul may *truſt* in thee, and find relief. And they who know thy name will do ſo: for *in the Lord Jehovah is Everlaſting Kindneſs and Strength.* To anſwer all my doubts, to ſupply all my wants, to fill all my deſires. May not God take it unkindly, that I truſt him no more? And is it not a criminal unkindneſs, that I give him not the glory of all theſe Excellent Attributes, which are the grounds of Truſt; by a conſtant, ſteady, intire dependance on him for all that I need?

I have none in Heaven but *Thee*, O Lord! as the object of my *Invocation and Worſhip.* Let other Chriſtians have recourſe to *new Mediators*, and call upon other Gods: I will make mention of *thy Name*, and of thy Righteouſneſs *only.* And ask of thee whatſoever I need, for the ſake of *thy Chriſt*, my *only* adorable *Mediator.* Him thou hear-

eſt alway; with him thou art always well pleaſed. I honour the *holy Angels*, as glorious Attendants about thy Throne: and bleſs thee for them, as Miniſtring Spirits, for the good of thy Servants; but I dare not invoke, or worſhip 'em, becauſe they are *Fellow Servants*. On the ſame account I honour the memory of *Departed Saints*, but neither invoke them, or pay them religious worſhip. That Glory, thou wilt not give unto another. I have no *precept* in Holy Scripture to direct, no *promiſe* to encourage, no *Example* to authorize the invocation of any other but Thee; *in whom I believe, and truſt*, Rom. 10. 14.

Having ſuch a God in *Heaven*, what can I need on *Earth?* His Eyes behold me, his Wing is over me, his Hand can ſupply me, his Grace provide for me. I can *want nothing that is Good:* unleſe I ſhould need *ſomewhat* which *God*, the infinitely Bleſſed and *Allſufficient God*, cannot beſtow. If thou art the Portion of my Soul; all mine *Enemies* cannot make me *miſerable*: unleſs they can void Heaven of the preſence of God, hinder his care, bind up his hand, or obſtruct his Love. But tho my Enemies cannot, I fear my *Sins* may. *They* alone can ſeparate between God and my Soul. And conſidering the multitude and aggravations of them,

them, and thine unſpotted Holineſs and Juſtice; I ſhould have too much reaſon to fear and tremble, yea, and utterly deſpair, *If I had none in Heaven but Thee.* But thy word aſſures me, that *I have a Mediator there: a faithful and a compaſſionate High Prieſt, Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous: whom thou haſt exalted to be a Prince, and a Saviour, to give Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins. Who lives for ever in Heaven, to make Interceſſion, till he hath brought me there, to behold his Glory, and partake of it.*

That *Glory*, O Lord! thou haſt reſerved for *Heaven:* in this world we only *deſire*, believe, and hope to injoy it. Whom *have* I in Heaven? That is the place of *Fruition.* What can I *deſire* upon *Earth?* This world is the place of *Deſires*, as the other of full *Injoyment.* Moſt of that which men call Injoyment in this Life, conſiſts but in Deſire. Deſire or *Luſt* is all that is in the wicked world. 1 *John* 2. *c.* 13. the Riches of a Covetous worldling makes him deſire more: and the great myſtery of Intemperance is to create and increaſe deſires: and *Deſires* of another kind are the portion of good men in this world. O that I could breathe after a ſtate of perfect Fruition in Heaven with more importunate deſires! *Who will give me to be in Heaven with*

Thee? On Earth I deſire nothing. So one verſion. Let me, *O my Soul!* think of *Heaven*, as ſuch a place, or ſtate of *bleſſed Injoyment!* ſpeak of it, ſeek it, long for it, prepare for it, as *ſuch.* And let *Jeſus Chriſt*, who is *the deſire of all Nations*, (through whom all Divine Communications are made to fallen Sinners) be the great object of my preſent *deſires* and love! Let me deſire nothing but as *in* him; and *for* him; that believing his Word, obeying his Law, adoring his Perſon, imitating his Example, truſting his Promiſe, conſtrained by his Love, partaking of his Image, filled with his Grace, and comforted by his Spirit; my meditations of him may be ſweeter, and my love ſtronger; and I may have nothing more left to *deſire* for my ſelf, but that God who hath raiſed and exalted *Him*, would keep alive my faith, and hope, and holy deſires, till he hath made me *meet* to be with him; and after having guided me by his Grace, and Spirit, and Councels, here on Earth, would receive me to his moſt Bleſſed and Glorious Preſence in Heaven. *Amen, Amen.*

XXII.

XXII.

The Glorious Appearance *of* Chriſt *to* Judgment *conſidered as* Certain: *The* Terror, *and* Aſtoniſhment, Confuſion, *and* Deſpair *of* Wicked Jews *and* Chriſtians, *to behold their* Judge: *and hear his condemning Sentence to* EVERLASTING *Deſtruction.*

WHen our Bleſſed Saviour ſhall appear to judge the world, I read that it ſhall be, *in his own Glory, the Glory of his Father, and of the Holy Angels.* If by the *glory of his Father*, be meant that of the Divinity, as the Original and Author of all things in nature, as the Almighty Creator of the World; and by the *Glory of his holy Angels*, be underſtood that of the Legal adminiſtration, the *Law* being given by the diſpoſition of Angels; and by *his own Glory*, that of the Goſpel, as he is the *Meſſiah*; that in the Glory of all theſe, he ſhall come to Judgment: we have a ſummary account of the *three different Revelations* which God hath made of himſelf to mankind; by the Light of *Nature*, that of the *Law*, and the more manifeſt one of the *Goſpel.* According to which

every man is to be judged at the laſt day.

Tho we cannot diſtinctly tell what or how great our Lord's *Glory* will then be; we may be certain, it will be ſuitable to the dignity of his Royal perſon; ſuitable to the grandeur of his Father's Majeſty; with the ſplendor of a *Triumphant Prince*, who is *Heir of all Things*, and hath all power in Heaven and in Earth committed to him; the Great Lord of both Worlds, Head of Angels and Men: and ſuitable to his glorious office, as Mediator, and the appointed Judge of Quick and Dead.

If at his *Tranſfiguration* his Face ſhone, and his Rayment was white and glittering, How much more ſplendid will his laſt Appearance be? When the *Bodies* of his Saints ſhall be ſeven times brighter than the luſtre of the *Sun*? And if his Members ſhall then be ſo glorious, how tranſcendantly more *ſo* will their Head, their *Lord* appear? If the delivery and promulgation of the *Law*, on Mount *Sinai*, was accompanied with ſuch circumſtances of terrible Majeſty, how much more may we ſuppoſe the *Great Aſſize* will be attended with? When he comes to judge for the violation of the Law, and the contempt of the Goſpel. And if even *Moſes* did then exceedingly quake and fear, what will be the conſternation

and

and trembling of the wicked World at the Coming of Chriſt? *When he ſhall be revealed from Heaven, in flaming Fire*, with a glorious retinue of his mighty *Angels*, as ſo many bright Stars about the more glorious Sun of Righteouſneſs. The lights of Heaven ſhall be Eclips'd; the viſible Sun ſhall vail its bluſhing head as infinitely out-ſhone: the preſent glory of the Creation be all benighted, by reaſon of his tranſcendant Brightneſs. Yea, the Heavens ſhall be wrapt up as a ſcroll; the Elements melt away with a mighty noiſe: the Earth and all its works be burnt up; and the whole Univerſe as one great Bonefire, to adorn the *Triumph* of our Lord's Appearance. And this uſhered in by the voice of an *Archangel*, proclaiming his approach: and the voice of God ſupplying the uſe of a Trumpet, to raiſe the Dead, and poſſeſs mankind with an aweful Reverence of their Judge.

Thus in Triumph, as a *Conqueror*, and a *Judge*, ſhall he come again, who once appear'd in the form of a Servant to be judged and condemn'd by Man. *Then* he was called *King* in ſcorn: *now* he will appear as much above all Earthly and Humane Greatneſs, as once he ſtoopt for our ſakes beneath it. *Then* the Contempt of Na-

tions, and no way eſteem'd Deſirable, when he came from the womb of his Virgin-Mother: *now* the Terror of the World, when he comes again from the right hand of his Father. No more to be ſubject to a ſtate of Meanneſs, but *to render vengeance to all, who know not God, and obey not the Goſpel: and to be glorified in his Saints, and admired in, and by all them that believe* *.

He was put to *ſhame* in the days of his Fleſh, made himſelf of no Reputation, and accounted unworthy to live; but when he comes again, he will put on a Garment of Vengeance, to repay Fury to the Enemies of his Croſs, and make his wicked Deſpiſers riſe again to ſhame, and everlaſting Contempt. They that once bowed the knee to him in *mockery*, and ſhaked their heads at him in *deriſion*, ſhall then *ſee every knee bow before him, of things in Heaven, things in Earth, and under the Earth*; Angels, Men, and Devils in ſubjection to him as Lord and King. *Pilate*, who condemn'd him as his Priſoner, ſhall appear before him as his rightful Judge; and know, that he was another-gueſs King and Monarch than the *Roman* Emperor. The *falſe-witneſſes*, who accuſed

* 2 Theſſ. 1. *chap.*

him

him of Blaſphemy, ſhall be impeach'd by one another, and their own guilty Conſciences, before *his Bar*, with the other *Jews*, who once drag'd him before their Tribunal; and be confounded to ſtand before his Judgment Seat. His *Crucifiers* ſhall behold him on a Throne of Glory, whom they Nailed to an infamous Croſs. They ſhall be aſtoniſh'd to behold him ſitting at the Right Hand of God, whoſe Hands they bound, whoſe Body they ſcourg'd, whoſe Side they pierc'd. They who Crown'd him with *Thorns*, ſhall (with all the World) behold him with a Crown of *Glory*. They that ſpit on him, and ſmote him on the face with the fiſt of wickedneſs, ſhall have their own faces covered with Confuſion. They that approved his Condemnation to Death, as a Criminal, ſhall be ſentenced from his mouth, as their Judge, to Everlaſting Deſtruction. They that ſcourged him, as a Malefactor, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes. They that made him ſtagger under the weight of his Croſs, ſhall ſink under the Guilt and Puniſhment of deſpiſing it. They that Nailed him to the accurſed Tree, between Thieves and Robbers, ſhall be ſentenc'd to endleſs Puniſhment in much worſe Company. They who gave

him Gall and Vinegar to drink, ſhall not be able to get a drop of water to cool their own Tongues. Where then ſhall the wicked and ungodly of the *Chriſtian World* appear? who Crucifie the *Son of God* afreſh, ſince he hath declared himſelf to be *ſo*, by his Reſurrection, and the Miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, and fulfilling his threatned vengeance on the Nation of the *Jews*, &c?

If the *Jews* ſhall have a ſorer Condemnation than Ignorant *Heathens*, who never heard of Chriſt, never ſaw his Miracles, or were inform'd of his Doctrine; How ſhall we eſcape? For he will come again as *a Conqueror*, and *a Judge*, and not as a ſufferer and a ſurety, as he came at firſt; and tho he was numbred with Tranſgreſſors, and made his Grave with the Wicked, at his firſt Appearance; he ſhall hereafter be attended with the ſhouts of Angels who excel in ſtrength, and the joyful Acclamations of his Saints, glittering as the Light, and paying Homage to him as the Judge of Quick and Dead. He, whom we have deſpiſed, ſhall then be encompaſt with a dazling Glory that will confound us. He, whom we have affronted, will be clothed with a Majeſty that ſhall aſtoniſh us. He, whom we have offended, ſhall be armed

with

with Power, and with Wrath to punish us: and all that continue to lift up the Heel against him, shall then be made his Foot-stool: all that refuse to kiss the Scepter of his Grace, shall be broken in pieces by his Iron Rod.

The holy Scripture doth frequently and expressly assure us, that he will *thus* come again, and for these ends. He is exalted, and gone to Heaven, *as the Head of his Church*, and the King of Glory; and when he foretold his Ascension, he gave a promise of his Return. The Heavens are to contain him till *the restitution of all things*. By his Providence, and by the Holy Spirit, he now carries on the designs of his Death: and when these are accomplish'd, he will appear, to the Joy of Believers, and the Confusion of the Wicked. He is entred as our * *Forerunner*, within the Veil, to prepare Mansions, and to take possession for us, and will not always leave us in this dark and defiling World. He knoweth our Sorrows, and heareth our Prayers, and bottles our Tears, takes notice of our Groans, and in all our Afflictions he is afflicted. *Being reconciled by his Death*, at his first coming, *we shall be saved by his Life*, since he lives to make good his word of coming again.

* *Heb.* 6 *c.* 19, 20. 10 *c.* 20.

How

How comfortable is the *News* of it? how joyful will be the *Meeting*, to ſuch as expect and prepare to ſee him? when the Sea and the Graves ſhall yield up their Dead, and all the *Priſoners of Hope* lift up their heads, ariſe, go up, and meet the Lord in the Air, and aſcend with him to the Heavenly Glory. But who can expreſs how diſmal a ſight this will be to the *Secure*, and the *Impenitent*, to all who die in their ſins? to behold their *Judge* (who formerly offered to be their *Saviour*) upon a glorious Throne, and all the Children of *Adam* ſummon'd before his Tribunal! to have nothing to anſwer againſt his Charge, and no way to eſcape his condemning Sentence! they deſpiſed him as a *Lamb* offer'd in Sacrifice to take away the ſins of the World: but ſhall no longer do ſo, when he comes as the *Lion* of the Tribe of *Judah*, to devour and deſtroy the Enemies of his Croſs. *Now* they will not own him for their *Lord*, but ſhall *then* find he is ſo, by the Vengeance he will execute. As a *Jeſus*, as a *Saviour*, they rejected him, making light of his Salvation, deſpiſing his Mercy, refuſing his Grace: but the *neglected Goſpel* will then be a more *killing Letter* than the *Law*. He who by his Ambaſſadors doth now intreat Sinners to be reconciled, will then be as deaf to *their Intreaties*,

Intreaties, as they have been to *His*: Becauſe they would not turn at his Reproof, hearken to the Call of his Word, and obey its Voice, they muſt hear the Sentence of Condemnation, and feel the Execution of it, whether they will or no; yea, the Blood of his *Croſs* will upbraid, accuſe, and plead againſt them. And whatever fooliſh Evaſions they now make, to continue in ſecurity, they ſhall then be *Speechleſs*, and *Self-condemned*. Nothing will be able to hide them from the amazing Preſence of their *Judge*, or from the Wrath of the *Lamb*. He then will inflict an intolerable and righteous Vengeance, an *Everlaſting Deſtruction*, upon all the ignorant and ungodly World: the Greateſt, the Stouteſt, the Boldeſt of them, ſhall then be humbled, and ſtand before Chriſt's Tribunal, upon an *equal Level* with the meaneſt; ſeized with horror, filled with guilt, anguiſh, and deſpair; and find, to their eternal Confuſion, that *the Judge is no reſpecter of perſons, but every man ſhall receive according to his works*. The Mighty ſhall not be ſpared for his Greatneſs, nor the mean man for his Poverty. *O Fool*! *O Wretch* that I am! ſhall many then ſay, who now brave it out in Pride and Vanity, unconcern'd about a future Judgment! not to be perſuaded by the terrors of

of the Lord, which I was ſo often warn'd and foretold of! What Refuge of Hope can I now flie to? What can I ſay for my ſelf? What can I do to eſcape, to die, to exiſt no longer? I would have *no compaſſion* on my own Soul; I would not ſo much as *conſider* its danger; I ſhall now find *none* from Chriſt, I can expect none! His Mercy is gone, and gone for ever! I am loſt, undone, tormented, and muſt eternally be ſo! O the *Amazement*, *Horror*, and *Deſpair* of ſelf-condemned Sinners in that day of Vengeance!

O my Soul! what is there of greater conſequence, or of greater certainty from the Word of God, than that *I muſt* appear to Judgment, when Chriſt ſhall come again? *Lord*, teach me to believe it firmly, to conſider it often, to lay it ſeriouſly to heart, to act under the Influence and Power of it as long as I live; that at the *Great Reſurrection* from the Dead I may lift up my head with a joyful Hope, and find the *Judge* to be *my Friend*, *my Advocate*, *my Jeſus*, and not *my Enemy* and *Deſtroyer*.

XXII.

XXIII.

Meditations of the Glory *of* Chriſt *in his* Glorified Saints, *and of the* thankful Admiration *of* Believers *when* He *ſhall* come again *from Heaven, which ſhall be continued to all* Eternity.

THE terror of our Lord's Appearance to Judgment cannot be greater to the *Wicked*, than the *Comfort* and *Joy* of it will be to the *Saints*. When they ſhall ſee Him whom their Souls love, aſcend with him to Heaven, and be welcom'd, according to his promiſe, with thoſe endearing words, * *Come, ye bleſſed Children of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the World.* 'Twas for 'your ſakes I aſſumed Fleſh, lived on Earth, 'and died on the Croſs, to purchaſe this 'Glorious Kingdom for you, which I now 'come to give you the Poſſeſſion of. 'Twas 'for this I praied and ſuffered on Earth, 'for this I interceded ever ſince in Heaven: 'I was heard in that *Prayer*, accepted in 'thoſe *Sufferings*, and my *Interceſſion* grant-'ed, *that where I am, you may be alſo, to be-*

* *Matt.* 25.

'hold

'*hold my Glory. Come* therefore, *good and* '*faithful Servants, enter into your Lord's joy.* O what raviſhing words will theſe be! What an Extaſie of Love and Kindneſs is implied in them! What matter of rejoycing may it now give me, to admit the *Hope*, that my Bleſſed Saviour will ſay ſuch words as theſe to *me*, and bid *me* ſtand upon his Right-hand, among his Sheep! O what an exulting frame of Soul will ſuch Expreſſions raiſe! How ſhall all my Doubts and Fears and Sorrows be ſcatter'd in a moment, and ceaſe for ever! O Glorious Day! when my bleſſed Lord ſhall thus publickly acknowledge me for his own, and plead my Cauſe againſt all the Accuſations of Satan, and the malicious Calumnies of all his Inſtruments! when I ſhall be able to ſay of all my Sins and Sufferings, as my Lord upon the Croſs, *It is finiſhed, it is finiſhed!* My warfare being accompliſh'd, being more than Conquerour over all, through him who loved me, and died for me, and now is come to *wipe away all tears from mine eyes*, as it were with the *Napkin* that was bound about his Head, when laid in the Grave; all being the fruit of his meritorious Death. Then ſhall I have nothing more to fear, or wiſh, or beg. I ſhall offend, provoke, and diſhonour him no more;

or

or by my folly and ſcandal diſcredit his holy Name and Goſpel: but by *conſummate Holineſs* be fitted to rejoyce in his Preſence and Love, and celebrate his Praiſe for ever. I ſhall never more lament his Abſence, or complain of his Anger; never ſee a cloud on his Face, or a Frown in his Look any more. *Now* I muſt wait and pray, ſtruggle and ſtrive, labour and ſuffer, deſire and expect, believe and hope, *&c.* but *then* perfect Reſt and Holineſs, Love and Joy, Viſion and Fruition, Bliſs and Glory, unutterable and everlaſting, ſhall take place.

All the *Attributes* of God, all the wonderful *Perfections* of Chriſt, will then be *glorified* in Believers, and admired by them. His invariable *Truth* will then be honoured, which they truſted to, and waited for; for now they ſhall know and find they did not wait in vain: They hop'd in his Word, and ventur'd their Salvation upon it; and now they ſhall receive the end of their Faith and Hope, infinitely beyond what they ever expected or believed.

The Glory of *Divine Wiſdom* will then appear, when the Conſtitution, Adminiſtration, and Deſign of the Mediator's Kingdom ſhall be fully known, in the admirable Order and Beauty of every part of it, with the exact tendency of all the particulars

lars to one Glorious End, and the whole Undertaking crown'd with ſo bleſſed an Iſſue. What is now a *Myſtery* even to Believers themſelves, and hath a Veil upon it, ſhall then no longer be ſo; all the Riddles of God's Grace and Providence ſhall be plainly underſtood. O how tranſporting a View muſt it needs be, when the *Glory* of all the *Divine Attributes* which God intended to accompliſh, *in* and *by Chriſt*, ſhall be manifeſt to his Redeemed Saints. The whole method of our Salvation will then appear to be the fruit of *unſearchable Wiſdom*, when we ſhall all ſee the Reality and Subſtance, and entire Scheme, of all that God deſigned in and by him; all that was typified of him, and foretold concerning him, in the Old Teſtament. How will it all appear to be *the manifold Wiſdom of God!* Epheſ. 3. c. 10.

As in uniting Heaven and Earth together in the Perſon of our Mediator; fulfilling the Truth of a terrible threatning in his Death, and by the ſame way accompliſhing *many gracious Promiſes; ſatisfying Juſtice, and at the ſame time ſhewing Mercy; manifeſting infinite Grace and Kindneſs by

* Vid. *Mr.* Charnock *of the Divine Attributes* Wiſdom.

ſhedding

ſhedding of Blood; conquering Death by dying, and diſarming the Law by Obedience to it, *&c.* afterwards ſubduing the world to the Faith of the Goſpel, by the fooliſhneſs of Preaching; making men wiſe to Salvation by the knowledge of the Croſs; and ſpreading that Faith the more by all the oppoſition made againſt it, *&c.* How wonderfully will a clear View of theſe things diſcover, and glorifie the Wiſdom of God.

But the *Love and Grace of Chriſt*; the infinite Goodneſs and Compaſſion of God, will then be magnified in an *eſpecial* manner. What but *Soveraign Love* in the whole Contrivance and Counſel of God about our Redemption? What admirable Love and Grace in the whole management of that deſign? What unparallel'd kindneſs in the accompliſhment of it, by the Sacrifice of the Son of God? And how Glorious will *this Love* appear, when he ſhall come again to give us the full Harveſt of all his Purchaſe? With what admiring Thankfulneſs ſhall Believers then contemplate the unſearchable Riches of his Grace? In all the Parts and Inſtances of his Humiliation, from his Conception to his Crucifixion and Burial; in all the Evidences and Diſcoveries made of it, from the firſt Promiſe

to

to its Completion; yea, from before the Foundation of the World, in the *Covenant of Peace* between the Father and the Son, until his ſecond Coming, to Judge the World, and deliver up the Kingdom to his Father.

How ſhall we then admire and adore his *Powerful Grace*, which ſnatcht us as Firebrands out of everlaſting Burnings; that effectually ſhin'd into our minds by heavenly Light; conquer'd the Oppoſition of our ſtubborn Wills; Sanctified our carnal Hearts, reſcued us from the Tyranny of Satan, and the Dominion of Luſt; giving, cheriſhing, and preſerving the holy Seed of *Grace*, and making it Spring up to Eternal Life; defeating the malicious and ſubtil Endeavours of the Devil to deſtroy it; inabling us to indure Tribulation, and perſevere to the end; giving us Victory over *Death*; conducting us through the dark Valley; raiſing our Bodies, reviving and reuniting them to our Souls, and rendring them glorious like his own Body; and at length rewarding our imperfect Services with *Eternal Life*. Yea, tho our beſt Services were mixt with Sin, our holieſt Duties ſpotted, our moſt couragious Sufferings mixt with unbelief, yet rewarded with a Bleſſedneſs that hath no alloy

of Evil, but all the ingredients of a *Perfect Felicity*, and nothing to leſſen and interrupt it: How ſhall we then admire the *Bounty* of our Gracious Lord, the Freeneſs, Tenderneſs, Riches, and the exceeding Greatneſs and Glory, of his *Infinite Goodneſs* and *Grace* to poor Believers?

With what Extaſies of Joy and Gratitude may we imagine that our Lord will be then admired by all his Redeemed ones?

Saying, *This is He*, who made our Peace with God, and reverſt the Sentence of Damnation, which we were under; who bought us with the price of his moſt precious Blood, bore the Wrath of his Father, and ſubmitted to an infamous and curſed Death for us. He aſſumed *our* Nature, that we might partake of *his*; became the *Son of Man*, that we might be made the *Children of God*; *for our ſakes he became poor, that we through his Poverty might become Rich*: He ſtoopt to bear the greateſt Ignominy and Reproach, to confer Honour on us: He was *for a time* forſaken of his Father, that we might not be ſo *eternally*: He felt the ſtroke of his Anger againſt Sin, that we might not periſh under it. He was a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Griefs, that we might Rejoyce: His Agonies

nies and bloody Sweat were for our Refreſhment, and by his Stripes we are Healed: He bowed his Head on the Croſs, that we might lift up ours in Triumph; and becauſe we had eaten of the forbidden Fruit, he hung on the accurſed Tree. 'Twas *for us* that he ſuffered the Frowns of Heaven, the Enmity of Hell, the Rage of Devils, the Hatred and Perſecution of the World: He was judged, that we might not come into Condemnation: He was Crucified, that we might be Glorified; and he is now *Come again* finally and fully to effect it.

O the *Height*, and *Depth*, and *Length*, and *Breadth* of the *Love of Chriſt*, which paſſeth Knowledg, but calls for Admiration, and everlaſting Gratitude! This is the *Bleſſed Day*, we long'd and waited, and prayed for! This is our *Gracious*, our *Glorious Lord*, whoſe Love melted our Heart, whoſe Promiſe was our Support, whoſe Word was our Rule, whoſe Spirit was our Comforter, whoſe Croſs was our Crown, and the hope of his Appearance our chief Conſolation!

Lord! what *am I*, what *was I*, that the ever Bleſſed Son of God ſhould do and ſuffer, and purchaſe all this *for me?* I can remember when I was ignorant of God, a Stranger

Stranger to him, at Enmity with him, under the Power of Darkneſs, and the Devil, ſerving divers Luſts and Pleaſures, haſtening to Hell, and liable to his Wrath. But he choſe me out of the World, ſtampt his Image upon me, pardoned my Sins, and imbrac't me in the Arms of his unchangeable Love. *O happy Change!* and yet how little did I prize his Grace, admire his Love, and expreſs my own, or promote his Glory, and honour him in the Eyes of others? How did I diſhonour my Profeſſion and holy Calling, as his Diſciple, by aggravated Apoſtacy? But he recovered me by *Repentance*, and healed my *Back-ſlidings*, and received me graciouſly, becauſe he loved me freely. *O admirable Grace!* to pardon, and ſave, and bring to Glory ſuch an unthankful *Wretch*, as *I* have been! to make ſuch a *Difference* between *Me* and *Others*, whom I knew on Earth! that the ſame Power, which makes *them Miſerable*, now makes *me Bleſſed!* that when they are baniſht from his Preſence into Everlaſting Deſtruction, I am admitted to behold his Glory, and ſhall dwell with him for ever!

O, how much *more* do I now ſee and find, than ever I believed, of the Love of Chriſt, and his promiſed Salvation! How much

much *more* glorious is the Perſon of my Redeemer! How much *more* Excellent is the heavenly State, than ever I thought or expected! I could not have imagined the *thouſandth thouſandth Part* of that which I now ſee and feel. I cannot but admire, and ſpend an *Eternity* in admiring, and praiſing the incomparable Grace and Glory of my bleſſed Redeemer.

Such holy Admiration will certainly produce the moſt *thankful Adorations* of our Lord Jeſus. Saying one to another, *O Bleſs the Lord of Love and Glory!* who humbled himſelf ſo low, as our Mediator, and hath exalted us ſo high, as the bleſſed Fruit of it! How can we ever *enough* adore and praiſe him, who condeſcended ſo far, and hath done and ſuffer'd ſo much for us? See how the holy Angels worſhip this King of Glory! and have not every one of us more reaſon to do ſo? O let all the Quire of Heaven celebrate his glorious Love! and let us his Redeemed, his Glorified ones ſay continually, *Let the Lord be magnified; who hath loved us, and waſhed us from our Sins in his own Blood, and made us Kings and Prieſts unto God his Father, and through him ours.*

O merciful Saviour! O glorious Change! *O happy Society!* with whom we ſhall Eternally

nally adore our Common Lord. We can ſome of us remember when we lived together on Earth, how we wept and prayed, and faſted and mourned together, how we ſuffered, and complain'd, and ſin'd together. O the marvellous Change our Redeemer hath now wrought for us, and in us! Theſe Bodies, theſe Souls, this Life, this Place, this Company, theſe Injoyments, are not like thoſe in yonder World. But *alas*, who can deſcribe what Believers ſhall then think and ſay to extol their Saviour! How ſmall a Portion is it we underſtand of that World? How little can I conceive, and how much leſs expreſs? Bleſſed be God we know ſo much, as the matter of our joyful Hopes; and for ever Bleſſed be God, who hath promiſed and provided ſuch a Glory for us, as cannot now be fully known.

What inexpreſſible Sweetneſs might Believers taſt by rejoycing in *Hope*, did a more lively *Faith* realize all this to their Souls? We might liſten as it were to the Shouts and Acclamations of the *Saints* above, and ſay *Amen* to their Thankſgivings. We might behold them about the Throne of God, and of the Lamb, with Palms of *Victory* in their Hands, a Crown of *Glory* on their Heads, and Songs of

Triumph in their Mouths, ſaying, *Alleluiah*; * *Worthy art Thou, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Power, for thou haſt created all things, and for thy Pleaſure they are, and were created. And worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive Power, and Riches, and Wiſdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Bleſſing. And again, Bleſſing, Honour, Glory, and Power be unto him who Sits upon the Throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

Whence is it, *O my Soul!* if indeed, I believe and expect all this; that I can Hear, and Read, and Think, and Speak of *theſe great Things*, with no more ardent Affections, ſuitable Preparations, importunate Prayers, and vigorous Deſires? How ſhould the believing Thoughts of that Day promote my heavenly Mindedneſs, Self-denial, Contempt of the World, Patience and Perſeverance? Quicken my Zeal, ſecure my Stedfaſtneſs, and give Life and Spirit to my Prayers for the haſtening of it? How ſhould my Soul riſe towards *Heaven*, by holy Love and Deſire? Aſcend and meet him, get as near him as I can, breathe after more of his Preſence, and beg him to prepoſſeſs my Heart, to anticipate

* Rev. 4. c. 11. 5. c. 12, 13.

his

his ſecond Coming by clearer diſcoveries of his Love, and fuller Communications of his Grace? *Even ſo, Come Lord Jeſus!*

XXIV.

Concerning the Examination *of a man's* Heart *and* Life: *the Reaſonableneſs, Advantages, and Neceſſity of it. Some Direction and Advice concerning the* Time *and* Manner. *That we may know in what* Preparedneſs *we are for* ETERNITY.

I Am haſtening every Year, every Day, to the period of this Life: I muſt *ſhortly* appear before my Glorious Judg; and experience theſe Terrors or Comforts, this Bleſſedneſs or Miſery, which I have now read of. Shall I not therefore inquire, which of the two belongs to me? Is it not worth conſidering, whither I muſt go, and how I ſhall fare, when I quit this Body? What is like to be my next Habitation? To which of the two unchangeable States I ſhall be adjudg'd? Shall an Inquiry of ſo much conſequence be put off, to an indefinite hereafter? Do I not deſire to know the worſt, while a remedy may be found? Or am I content to dye, through

an unwillingneſs to diſcover that I am Sick? The queſtion to be reſolved, is of infinite weight. Shall I not ſpend a few hours to know what will become of me *for ever?* An error is more than poſſible, 'tis eaſy to miſtake; and the hazard of doing ſo is unſpeakably great. How many thouſands periſh eternally, even under the Light of the Goſpel, who never ſuſpected their Danger? How ordinary, how common a thing is it, for Men to be thus deceived! how ſucceſsful is the Devil in this ſtratagem againſt the Souls of Men! Is it not then a moſt criminal ſtupidity, to be contentedly ignorant, and unreſolved, whether I am reconciled to God or no; whether I am led by the Fleſh or the Spirit; whether I am in the broad or narrow way, which lead to ſuch contrary ends; that is, whether, if I die in this condition, I ſhall be *ſaved*, or *periſh?* Can ſuch an *enquiry* be *frivolous* or *indifferent?* Is the *ſubject* of it ſo *contemptible*, or *my concern* in it ſo *ſmall*, that it merits not to be attentively conſidered? Shall I never ask my Soul, till I am leaving this World, (the *unfitteſt time* of all to begin ſo important an Affair) *what am I? to whom do I belong? whoſe Image do I bear? how have I lived, and what do I do? what do I love moſt? what do I moſt conſtantly deſire, and*

chooſe,

chooſe, and ſeek? how doth the Pulſe of my Soul beat? is it quickeſt towards God, *or towards the* World? *whither am I going? what will be the final upſhot and iſſue of my preſent courſe? is it* Heaven *or* Hell *I muſt be tranſlated to by dying? what ſecurity have I got for* Eternal Life? *what proviſions have I made? what foundation have I laid?*

How ſtrangely infatuated are moſt men, who talk of an *Everlaſting Life* as an Article of their Creed, and ſay they count upon it that they muſt dwell in *Happineſs* or *Miſery* for *ever*; and ſeldom or never bethink themſelves in good earneſt, and for any time, with a ſetled compoſed exerciſe of thoughts, which of theſe *Two* is like to be their Lot. Or if they begin to ſearch and try themſelves, they come to no *Concluſion*, or conclude too haſtily; they pluck off the Plaiſter as ſoon as it begins to ſmart; they are either frighted with the horrid proſpect of paſt Crimes, or, having eſcap'd the groſſer Pollutions of the World, judge too favourably of their own eaſe. They commonly do the work but by halves, and ſo go from the Glaſs, and forget what manner of perſons they were.

Let me therefore, *O my Soul!* ſequeſter my ſelf from the World, to commune with

my own heart, to reflect upon my paſt life, and look into my preſent ſtate, to recollect and review the moſt conſiderable paſſages of my courſe and time hitherto. O how neglected and diſuſed a Practice is this, which doth challenge and require our principal and moſt ſerious Concerns about it! And how many begin it, and are diſcouraged, and leave off without reaching the end of ſuch an Enquiry!

How much *wiſer* in this reſpect are the *Children of this World, in their Generation*, than the *Children of Light*? Who is ſo exact in his *Accompts* between *God* and his own *Soul*, as *Trades-men* in their *Dealings* with one another? Who is at the pains to write down his *Sins* and his *Mercies*? the *grounds* of his *Fear*, and the *encouragements* of his *Hope*? or keeps a *Journal* and *Diary* of his *Spiritual State*? Who doth at ſet times, once a *Month*, or once a *Quarter*, or even once a *Year*, take a juſt view of Himſelf, his Heart, and Life, and State, as a *Chriſtian*; that he may ſee what he hath received and done, what he owes, and what he may expect; that he may know whether he *thrive* or *decay*; whether he *increaſe* or *decreaſe*; whether he go *backward* or *forward*; wherher he be *Richer* or *Poorer* this year than the laſt? And is it not a *ſymptom* that you are *declining*, when

when you love not to examine your Accounts? Is there not ground of *jealouſie* and *ſuſpicion*, that you are *behind hand*, becauſe you are loath to inquire, whether you are or no? and unwilling to know the worſt of your Condition? Nevertheleſs, without ſuch *Enquiries*, and bringing the matter to a *Determination*, at what uncertainties muſt we live? and how unconceivable an hazard do all Hypocrites and unrenewed Sinners run? And how reaſonable, how neceſſary is it that we ſhould know, and in order to it, prove our ſelves? We muſt therefore beſtow Time and ſerious Diligence about it, that we may examine matters to the bottom, and come to ſome Reſult; ſo that we may form a right Judgment concerning our own caſe.

He that would do it to good purpoſe, muſt endeavour to underſtand clearly the terms of the *Covenant* on God's part, and on ours: and take care not to Judge of himſelf by miſtaken rules; by a falſe Standard, that God will not juſtifie; or by any ſuch characters as will not conclude. But moſt men are *unwilling* to bring themſelves to a *Trial*, or to let Conſcience deal plainly and faithfully with them. They are ſtupidly ſecure, and ſee not the neceſſity of this duty. Or do not ſuſpect themſelves.

They presume they need not be at that Trouble: or are so taken up with the World, that they cannot find *time* and leasure for it. And many men dare not bring their Hearts and Ways to a Trial. There is commonly some *secret Lust* indulg'd, which they are loath to let go. But most go on in sin, and perish Eternally, because they think there is no danger of perishing: and never Repent, and make their Peace with God, because they fancy and presume 'tis done already.

Therefore let me beg of thee, *whoever thou art*, who readest this, to put the case to thy self, seriously to admit the doubt, whether you are not mistaken; make the *supposition*, that you have not hitherto sufficiently considered the State of your Soul. You are confident that *all is well*; and thereupon are unwilling to examine farther: but for that very reason you ought to question, whether it be so or not? Do but ask your selves seriously, what is the *ground* of your good Opinion concerning your self? For what reason can you thus conclude?

Did you ever seriously lay to heart the *Characters*, and Description, which the Scriptures give, of those whom Christ will own at the last day; and of such whom he

he will reject and reprobate? With unfeigned application to your own caſe, have you therewith prov'd your ſelves? and come to a ſetled Judgment, after a deliberate Enquiry? And was the *Concluſion* to your Comfort and Joy? If ſo, what influence hath it ſince had upon your Heart and Life? Hath it promoted Purity, Thankfulneſs, Heavenly-mindedneſs, Contempt of this World, and ſtronger Deſires after the Image, Love, and Preſence of God, and the Glory of Chriſt? Moreover, conſider,

Is not this a good while a-go? How have you behav'd your ſelf ever ſince? Have you not reaſon to look back with ſhame? If you but *ſlightly* examin'd your ſelf formerly, reſolve to do it more effectually now: Review the ſins you have been ſince guilty of. And if you have not done any thing conſiderable of this kind, you ought *now* to begin. It is ſeaſonable to begin the year by ſuch an Exerciſe, and it will be found of great uſe, in all the following parts of it: eſpecially when you come to examine your ſelf afreſh, in order to the *Lord's Supper*. For we ought frequently to renew the ſad remembrance of our former Sins; that from time to time we may renew our *Repentance*, which is the

work of our Life, and not of one day. And he that comes to the Sacrament, and will look no farther back, than to the laſt Communion, may poſſibly preſume too much, that all was then as it ſhould be, and not be humble enough.

If any one therefore reſolve in good earneſt upon an holy Life, and ſeriouſly deſign to prepare for *Eternity*, as it is neceſſary to make a general review of his Life, ſo I deſire to afford him the beſt Counſel I can, in order to it.

It may be adviſable, (*a*) if you have not formerly begun this work, to imploy one hour at leaſt in a Day, for ſeveral Days following, in *writing down* the moſt conſiderable Paſſages of your Life you can remember, deſiring God's Aſſiſtance therein; and keeping your Eye upon your End, in the whole; that is, thinking ſeriouſly that 'tis in order to *Eternity*, that you now examine your ſelf. Chuſe a place of Retirement, and the moſt convenient Time, that you may not be interrupted, and when your Heart is moſt ſerious. Every man may divide his Life into ſeveral parts, as from *Infancy* till he left off going to School,

(*a*) Vid. Mr. *Baxter's Saints Reſt*. p. 3. chap. 7, 8, 9.

or

or was bound Apprentice, or ſetled in any way of Education. From thence, 'till fixt in ſome Imployment: If a married perſon, till entred into that Condition. And from thence to another remarkable Period, or to the preſent Time. It may better aſſiſt ſome perſons memory, to conſider the ſeveral *Places* of their abode, and compute according to them. In each portion of time, recollect what *ſins* you were moſt addicted to: in what Inſtances, with what Frequency, and with what other various aggravations, you committed 'em: and what have been the *effects* and conſequences of thoſe ſins, to your ſelves, and others, in order to Repentance, and godly Sorrow. Which muſt not be judg'd of by Tears, but Grief, and inward hatred of Sin. Remembring that no man is the better meerly for being examin'd, if there follows nothing after it. 'Tis in order to a *Judgement* to be paſs'd upon our ſelves. 'Tis to ſearch out *our own Iniquity*, our Beloved ſin, in order to the mortification of it. That *Goliah* muſt firſt be ſlain, if ever the other *Philiſtims* are conquered. In ſome it is Pride, in others Worldlineſs, in ſome Uncleanneſs, in others Drunkenneſs, Gluttony, *&c.* That you may diſcover it, obſerve,

What ſin 'tis you are moſt unwilling to part

part with: which you could even wish were not forbidden.

Which you have formerly been most apt to plead for, to extenuate or excuse, and hide.

The thoughts whereof do most frequently occur; especially when *alone*: first in the morning, and last at night: and are most distracting in Prayer and Worship.

Which an awaken'd Conscience hath most plainly told you of; under a Sermon, or at a Sacrament, or under some heavy affliction, or on a sick-bed, *&c.*

Which you can least bear to be reprov'd for.

Which the Temperament of your body doth most incline to.

Which your Calling, Imployment, Company, and Converse, administer the greatest Temptations for.

That especially which hath the Throne of the Heart, and sets all the faculties a work to contrive fuel and opportunities for its Gratification.

Observe likewise what *Passion* was most Predominant in each *Period* of Time, or is yet so; and what ill effects it hath produced. Consider farther what dangerous *Temptations* you have met with: how you have fallen by 'em, or been inabled to resist.

ſift. Conſider withal the *Time*, and the *Means*, whereby God hath at any time formerly awaken'd, convinc't and humbled you; what Purpoſes of Amendment, and Promiſes of Reformation you have ever made; and how far you have, or have not perform'd 'em. Recollect likewiſe all the *ſpecial Mercies* you have receiv'd from God in every State and Period of your Life, in order to thankfulneſs. The laſt Section of theſe Papers may give you ſome aſſiſtance therein, and conſider what Returns you have made to God, for all his Kindneſs.

You may do well to conſider your ſelf alſo, in the *Relations* you have ſtood to others; as *Inferior*, *Equal*, or *Superior*; in Family, Church, or State; in your Calling, Profeſſion, Imployment, *&c.* And examine in what *more notorious* Inſtances, you have been faulty in your Relative Duties. How you did ordinarily carry it in your Place and Station; for that is the beſt, the trueſt Picture of a Man, which is like him in his ordinary every days Habit. Particularly reflect upon the Sins you have committed in *Company* with others. By whoſe *Example* you have been drawn to Sin; who may probably have been tempted by yours, and bewail it; and if the

Perſons

Persons are living, admonish them to *Repent*; and if you have injur'd and wrong'd any, acknowledg your Fault, and to the utmost of your Power, make speedy Restitution. If any of your *Companions* in Sin are dead, and you fear dyed without Repentance; humble your self particularly before God for having contributed to their Damnation. I know of some who have made such a *Catalogue* of their Sins, with the most observable Aggravations of them; which they constantly preserv'd, and frequently review'd, to keep them Humble, Penitent, Watchful, and Thankful; and on some occasions of secret Humiliation, have spread them before the Lord (as *Hezekiah* did the writing of his Enemy) covering themselves with Shame and Confusion of Face, by considering what they have been, and thence admiring the Riches of free Grace, in the forgiveness of such Crimes, through the Blood of Christ.

Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my Reins, and my Heart, for thy Loving kindness is before mine Eyes, and I will walk in thy Truth. Thou hast searched me, O Lord, and known me; thou knowest my Thoughts a far off; all my secret Sins are in the Light of thy Countenance; and thou art acquainted with

with all my ways; ſet my Sins in order before me, that I may Repent, and forſake them. Show me mine Infirmities and Weakneſſes, that I may watch againſt them. And teach me to Judge and Condemn my ſelf, that I may not be judged of the Lord, or condemned with the World.

XXV.

How Chriſtians ought to examine their Decays *of* Grace *and* Piety. *The greatneſs of their* Sin, *and of their* Loſs *under ſuch a Declenſion: God's* Diſpleaſure, *and departure from them, conſidered, to awaken Endeavours of a Recovery. In what manner the* Faith *of* Adherence *may be acted by one, who hath no* Aſſurance.

IT cannot but be of uſe to *Believers* alſo, at ſtated Times to examine themſelves, concerning their Languiſhings and Decays in Grace, falling from their firſt Love, to a Spirit of Indifferency and Lukewarmneſs, diſorderly walking or unfruitfulneſs; whether *gray Hairs are not here and there upon them, and they know it not.* For God may withdraw by degrees, ſo that his departure may not preſently be perceiv'd. And ſome kind of Activity in Duty may be

continued

continued upon falſe Principles, and from Common Aſſiſtance, while a Chriſtian, as to his ſpiritual State, may be under a dangerous Conſumption. 'Tis not difficult for others to obſerve it ſome times, and would be viſible enough to themſelves, would they ſpare a few hours to examine the matter. The Puniſhment of ſuch Backſlidings, the loſs of the quickning and comforting Preſence of the Holy Spirit, deſerves likewiſe to be inquir'd into, in order to a ſpeedy Remedy, and ſhould enforce the Counſel.

I mean not barely the Ebbing of *Affections* in the Duties of Religion, or the want of Life, and quickning from *ſenſible Conſolations*, which new Converts, (eſpecially ſuch as have been reclaim'd from a courſe of notorious Impiety) have more of at firſt than afterwards. This *doubting Chriſtians* ſhould particularly take notice of, by the Inſtance of the *Prodigal*, who was extraordinarily feaſted at his firſt return, but was doubtleſs contented afterwards with the ordinary Proviſions of his Fathers houſe. Neither doth God diſpence the ſame meaſure to *all alike*, nor to *any* alike at *all Times*: Some, who are called to greater Services and Sufferings, than others, or had greater Conflicts before Converſion,

may

may have a greater ſhare than the reſt of their Brethren. Neither will the *ſame degree* of Grace imparted to *ſome* Perſons, ſo diſcernably move and comfort, as it will do ſome others of a different Temper. 'Tis not therefore ſo much to be the matter of our Enquiry, (if at all it need to be ſo) whether we have more or leſs of ſenſible Joy in the performance of Duty. But

Whether we are not fallen and declin'd, *as to the inward vital Acts of Grace, and in the outward Fruits of Holineſs.* Whether we have ſuch clear convincing Apprehenſions of Divine and Spiritual Truths, and the Myſteries of the Goſpel, as formerly; whether our minds are not become more vain and heedleſs; whether our Knowledg of God, and of the Revelations of his Will, be as powerful and efficacious upon our Hearts and Lives, as heretofore; whether there be no leſs Frequency, leſs Conſiſtency, leſs inward Satisfaction in holy ſerious Thoughts, than formerly. You were wont to pray and endeavour, that God might be *firſt* and *laſt* in your Thoughts every day, and by frequent Ejaculations in civil Affairs, to maintain a dayly converſe with God; but now you mind not whether it be ſo or not; yea, you cannot but know,

know, that it is not *thus* with you ſtill. It was once your Burden to be peſter'd with fooliſh, filthy, worldly, vain Thoughts, eſpecially on the *Lord's Day*, or in the Worſhip of God; you rejected and diſown'd them, you lamented and pray'd againſt them; do ſo much as examine, whether it be thus ſtill.

Conſider all your *Affections*, and their ſeveral Objects; and ſee whether a criminal Lukewarmneſs hath not diffus'd it ſelf into every of them. Examine every *Grace*; and ſee whether your Faith, Hope, Love, holy Deſires, and Delight in God be not miſerably abated; as to the ſtrength and vigor, the efficacy, and frequent exerciſe of every of them; ſo that your Thoughts of God are few, cold, and lifeleſs, without deſire, delight and love.

Conſider the *Opportunities of Publick Worſhip*, and ſolemn Occaſions of approaching the *Divine Preſence*: Are they as much the deſire of your Souls, and the rejoycing of your Hearts as once they were? Are you not more eaſily diverted from them, leſs ſatisfi'd and refreſht by them? Are not all Goſpel Ordinances leſs powerful and quickning; and your profit and advantage thereby unſpeakably leſs then formerly?

Do

Do you hunger and thirſt, and pant as the Hart after the Water-brooks, to draw nigh to God, and come into his Courts? Do you make Conſcience of preparing before hand? Do you come with a real deſire, and deſign, and expectation of profiting, and bettering your Spirits? Do you joyn in every part of Divine worſhip, with that attention, ſerioufneſs, and compoſure of mind, and taſte the ſweetneſs and benefit of ſuch ſolemnities, as *formerly?* Are ſuch ſervices performed with that Awe of God, with that Humility, Fervency, and Intenſneſs of Spirit, as ſometimes they were? Are you not more negligent and unconcern'd before and after, whether you find any thing of this or no? Tho your Deſires are weak, your Hearts flat, your Thoughts wandring, your Spirits trifling, ſo the work be done, and the duty be over, (in how formal, cuſtomary, and careleſs a manner, ſoever it be) you conſider it not, you lay it not to Heart, you reflect not upon it, you bewail it not, or at leaſt are better contented and ſooner quieted, and take leſs notice of the frame of your Heart in ſuch Duties, than formerly?

Examine farther, how 'tis with you as to the great *diſtinguiſhing Duties* of an upright Chriſtian; (if performed as they ought

ought to be) I mean *Secret Prayer and Meditation:* Are you as ſtrict and careful, conſtant and Conſcientious, frequent and abundant in theſe, as formerly? May not our Cloſets and places of Retirement witneſs againſt us? How ſeldome are we there? How quickly are we gone? How eaſily diverted? How ſoon tired? How do we trifle in that work, and ſhuffle it over, and take up with the ſhadow and image of Prayer? Our former humble and importunate Prayers, joyful Thankſgivings, and ſweet Contemplation of the Myſteries of Religion, compared with our preſent dayly practice, will teſtifie that we are declin'd and fallen.

Moreover conſider *the Evil of Sin*, and how your Heart ſtands affected to it. Is not your Hatred of Sin, and Zeal againſt it, much decayed? eſpecially with reſpect to inward *Spiritual ſins*, ſuch as the ſecret workings of unbelief, and diſtruſt, pride, envy, uncharitableneſs, *&c.* Do you bewail it, ſtrive againſt it, and ſhun the occaſions, and fear the temptations that may lead you into Sin, as once you did? Have you not loſt much of that tenderneſs, and holy Jealouſy over your heart and ways, you formerly had? Do you not now make more bold with Temptation? Are you not oftner

oftner conquered? and with leſs Reluctance? and by ſmaller Temptations? *&c.*

Are you not more *Unſerviceable?* Root and Fruit in a withering condition? God leſs Honour'd, and others leſs profited, and edified by your Example and Life? Do you not adhere more to the world? conform to it, and comply with it in many things, which formerly you durſt not have done? and are every day waxing worſe? Make a pauſe a while, and bethink your ſelf, what this will come to at laſt? When even the little Good that remains, is ready to dye.

May I not ask *ſuch Chriſtians*, or deſire them to ask themſelves; What is already the effect and conſequence of this Declenſion? Is not God's Spirit removed, and the Light of his Countenance Eclipſed? Yea as to many of them, are they not under ſad apprehenſions of God's diſpleaſure? Do they not feel the terrors of the Lord? Do they not walk heavily from day to day? They that could once converſe with *God* on all occaſions as a *Friend*, and a *Father*, do now think of God and are troubled: Thick Darkneſs doth incompaſs them round about: They have loſt the ſenſe of his Love, the comforts of his preſence, and their Song in the night, and ſee no relief.

lief. This is a more hopeful case however, than *theirs*, who are under great Backslidings and Desertion, and hardly sensible of it. To awaken and assist both; Consider I beseech you, *whence you are fallen*, and what you have lost, and what will be the issue of this; if Sickness, or some smart Affliction overtake you; or if you should dye in this condition. And inquire *seriously*, and presently, into the *cause* of all this Evil: for a few transient thoughts will not affect the Heart and persuade to Action. And do it *presently*, because by every delay your work will be the harder, your danger the greater, and your recovery the more difficult. Reflect upon the *Sinfulness* as well as *Affliction* of this case. Know that you have displeased God, and run from him, neglected his Presence, and griev'd his Spirit, and in what Instances you have done so; that hath made him weary of his dwelling: what Ordinances you have slighted; what Duties you have omitted; what sins you have given way to; in order to *Repentance* and deep Humiliation.

Can you *contentedly* sit still, with this dismal State of things? while *God hath somewhat* (yea a great deal indeed) *against you, for having left your first Love?* Will you not endeavour to remove that, which hath

hath made ſuch a ſeparation between God and you, and brought you thus low? What Communion with God, what Communications of his Grace, what Influences of his Spirit, and Evidences of his Favour have you loſt? And will you not acknowledg your Iniqnity, and abaſe your ſelves in the Duſt, and return to the Lord, and do your firſt works? that he may heal your Backſlidings, and receive you graciouſly; that you may again take hold of his *Covenant*, and be at *Peace* with him.

But to be *at Peace* with God, is not the whole of your Concern, you need not only a Pardon, but a *Phyſician* to heal you; as doth a Malefactor, that is not only liable to the Law, but deſperately ſick. Your State is *ſinful*, and dangerous, as well as troubleſome. From performing duties in ſuch a manner as you now do, you may quickly be Tempted to let them altogether alone. God may be ſo far provok'd to ſuffer Satan to make attempts upon you of that kind: (and he is forward enough to make uſe of ſuch an opportunity, to try all his Snares and Stratagems againſt you:) till he prevail with you, to think hardly of God himſelf, * unthankfully to overlook

* Vid. Mr. *Gilpin of Temptation.* p. 2. chap. 6.

all

all his former kindneſſes, to put the worſt Interpretation that can be upon all his Providences; to diſtruſt and quarrel with him, as if his faithfulneſs had failed, and his Mercy were clean gone for ever, and there were no hope left, for one in your caſe: and ſo run into *Deſperation*, and through the ſubtlety and violence of Satan's Temptations, try the moſt fooliſh and unlawful means for eaſe and cure; either open Licentiouſneſs, or it may be Self-Murder.

Therefore ſpeedy preſent *Repentance* is neceſſary, to find out, and mortifie *every Corruption*, and *that* eſpecially, which Conſcience tells us, you have moſt indulg'd; from whence your Diſtreſs doth principally ariſe: Confeſſing your ſin freely, fully, and without reſerve, and waiting on God in the diligent uſe of all means, for the recovery of that which you have loſt: and Juſtifying God in his Righteouſneſs, Truth, Wiſdom, Holineſs, in all his Rebukes. That you may regain a Spirit of Prayer, and taſte the ſweetneſs, vertue, and efficacy of every Duty, and of every Ordinance; and God may give you *the Garment of Praiſe for the Spirit of Heavineſs, and the Joy of the Lord may be your Strength*, for future ſervice and ſuffering.

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In the mean time, do not caſt away your *Hope*, but tho you have (too juſtly) depriv'd your ſelf of the *Faith of Aſſurance*, yet indeavour to maintain and exerciſe the *Faith of Adherence* (*a*). Say unto God, that *becauſe there is forgiveneſs with him*, therefore *he is to be feared*. My ſin is not too great to be forgiven. 'Tis not *the Unpardonable Sin*: for I deſire to repent, and am reſolv'd to return. I will ſtill cleave to the Lord, and wait upon him, and follow hard after him, and take no other courſe for Deliverance and Comfort. Mine is not a ſingle Caſe: I am not the only Soul that hath been ſo diſtreſſed, and yet found relief, by ſeeking unto God. 'Tis therefore *good for me to hope, and quietly wait for the Salvation of God* (*b*). I will draw near to God; I will lye at his foot; and continue in all ways of Worſhip and Duty, wherein I may hope to meet with the quickning, and comfort, of his Spirit: I will ſeek relief from no other; I will keep as near him as I can; whither elſe ſhall I go, *he alone hath the words of Eternal Life*; he alone *can create* (what is the fruit of his own lips) *Peace, Peace.*

(*a*) Vid. *Dr.* Owen on Pſ. 130. 2.
(*b*) Lam. 3. c. 26.

* I will encourage my ſelf in the conſideration of his General Grace, and the probabilities of his ſpecial Love: I will recollect my former Experiences, when I had ſome *good hope, through Grace*, concerning my Adoption: *I will remember the years of the right hand of the moſt High.* If God will give me ſo much Grace as to continue waiting, I will hope ſtill: and *though I walk in darkneſs, and ſee little or no Light, I will ſtay my ſelf upon the Lord.* And if by the want of *ſenſible* Conſolation he will make me more humble, and keep me in a greater Submiſſion to his will, I will bleſs his holy Name; and derive more comfortable hope from thence, than from the moſt ſweet and ſenſible Conſiderations I ever had; and look upon Humility, Self-denial, Dependance on God, Reſignation to him, and Hatred of ſin, as a better ſign of his *Love*, than the higheſt fervors of Affection in his ſervice can be.

Oh that I had formerly done as much for *Holineſs*, as I have for *Comfort*! by the enjoyment of the *one*, I ſhould have had more of the *other*: the Exerciſe of Grace would have diſcover'd the *Truth* of it. Let me

* Vid. *Mr.* Baxter's *Method for Peace of Conſcience.*

therefore accuſe and condemn my ſelf; but ſtill truſt, and love God, and wait upon him. Let me reſolve never to chooſe a new Lord or Maſter. Or take up with any Portion beneath God himſelf; or any way of Hope or Salvation, but by J. Chriſt, my only Saviour; neither let me forſake the way of Faith and Holineſs, for all the hopes and Happineſs of this World, if put to my choice. But be always able to ſay, (Bleſſed be God I now can) that *I will return to my former Husband, for then it was better with me than now.* I had peace and refreſhment in my former ways, I will return to them. *Lord, forſake me not utterly! Keep not thine Anger for ever: Caſt me not away from thy preſence, and take not thy H. Spirit from me: Reſtore unto me the Joy of thy Salvation, that my Heart may be inlarged to praiſe thy name, and to run the way of thy Commandments.*

XXVI.

Confeſſion *of Sin*, Humiliation, *and* Repentance *muſt follow upon Self-Examination. Advice concerning* Repentance *of ſome* particular Backſliding. *The great* Perplexity *and* Diſtreſs *of a* Penitent Sinner *repreſented, as a Caution againſt returning to Folly.*

THat we may *turn unto the Lord*, is the end of ſearching and trying our Ways. *Lord!* I have been ſearching my Heart, and conſidering my ways, but can find little or no *good*; neither can I diſcover *all* that is *evil* in both. But I find enough to make my own Heart condemn me, and Thou, *who art greater than my Heart, and knoweſt all things*, maiſt much more condemn me. I am altogether unclean, polluted, and abominable.

If I go about to enumerate the Sins of my Thoughts, Words, and Actions, in all the periods of my Life hitherto; if I conſider my Omiſſions of Duty, and dayly Crimes by actual Commiſſion; if I reflect upon my Sins according to their reſpective Object, as either againſt *Thee*, O God, and againſt my *Neighbour*, and againſt *my own*

Soul or *Body*; and compare my Heart and Life with thy ſtrict and holy *Law*, and think in how many Inſtances I have tranſgreſt *every* of thy Righteous Commandments: I find they are more than the hairs on my head, they cannot be number'd. *Who can tell how oft he hath offended?* Many of my ſins make little Impreſſion on my *Memory*, (I obſerve them not, I remember them not): but this hinders not, but they may make deep Impreſſion on my *Conſcience*, which will one day be awake, and ſet them in order before me; and they are all written in *thy Book* of Remembrance, in order to my final Judgment. *All my ſins are before thee:* but thou requireſt my humble *Confeſſion* of them, in order to Repentance; and as a part thereof, that I freely acknowledg their hainous aggravations to ſhame, and humble my ſelf the more before thee, whom I have offended and provok'd.

How long did I ſerve divers Luſts and Pleaſures, with the neglect and forgetfulneſs of God? How ſad a proſpect may I take of the far *greateſt* part of my Life paſt? Eſpecially of my *younger years*, which have been trifl'd away in vanity and folly? And ſince I have known the way of Truth, how ſhamefully have I prevaricated with

God? I am confounded to conſider, how often I have deſpiſed the Commandment, and rebelled againſt the Light; againſt the Principles of Education, and the checks of Conſcience, frequent warnings from God, and reproofs from Others; contrary to my Profeſſion, and Experience, contrary to the obligation of peculiar Mercies, ſolemn Promiſes, Reſolutions, and Engagements, and a nearer Relation to God than many others; Which ſins have *more* diſhonor'd my Lord, diſcredited his H. Goſpel, gratifi'd the Devil, ſcandaliz'd the world, and ſtrengthen'd the hands of the ungodly, than the ſins of others. And *alas!* How much of my precious Time is *thus* gone, which if duely improv'd, would *now* afford me comfort to review.

How much Guilt have I contracted *every Year*, particularly in *this* laſt? I now begin *another*, which will ſoon be gone as that which was concluded yeſterday. And ſhall I only advance in Age, to increaſe the number of my ſins, and heighten my Account againſt the Day of Reckoning? In Temporal and Civil Affairs *Day unto Day uttereth knowledg, ond Night unto Night teacheth Wiſdom.* We are Taught by *Experience* many uſeful Leſſons which we ſhould not elſe have learnt; to reform many Errors

rors and miſtakes, to correct many raſh and fooliſh Actions and Speeches, *&c.* And ſhall I not learn wiſdom by the *Experience* of another year, in what concerns my greateſt, my Eternal Intereſt? Shall not the reflection on my paſt ſins prevent my Commiſſion of the like? Eſpecially conſidering how my ſins are aggravated by every *Mercy* I have received; by every *Affliction* I have undergone; every awakening *Sermon* I have heard; every motion of *God's Spirit*, and every check of my own *Conſcience* that I have reſiſted; every offer of his *Grace*; every warning of his *Providence*; every invitation and call of his *Word*; every *purpoſe* to Repent, and every *reſolution* I have made to forſake ſin: The greater *knowledg* I have had of my danger, the longer time I have *deliberated* about it; the oftner I have *confeſs'd* my ſin, and been ſorry for it; every *reproof* I have had from others, and every *promiſe* I have made my ſelf, doth aggravate and encreaſe my Guilt.

How many Years hath God vouchſafed me to work out my Salvation? but how little have I done towards it? Had I died this laſt year, how unprepar'd muſt I have made my Appearance before his Tribunal? What opportunities of doing and receiving

Good have I let ſlip? Have I not made it more my buſineſs to *ſeem* Religious, than really to *be* ſo? How much of the Patience of God have I abus'd? refuſing his calls to Repentance, reſiſting the ſtrivings of his Spirit, ſmothering my Convictions, and turning the Grace of God into wantonneſs? Inſtead of returning gratitude for all his Love, I have repeated my Tranſgreſſions after Forgiveneſs: and gone in *a circle* of Repenting and Sinning, even to this day. *Lord*, I am aſham'd, and lay my ſelf in the duſt before thee. To me belongs nothing but ſhame and confuſion of Face. If God ſhould condemn and puniſh me as a Rebel, and a Traytor, and give me the Portion of Hypocrites, I cannot but own his *Juſtice*; even in Hell I muſt do it, with my flaming Tongue and Breath.

O Spare me for thy mercies ſake! *Enter not into Judgment with thy ſervant, for in thy ſight ſhall no fleſh living be juſtified: if Thou lay Judgment to the Line, and Equity to the Plummet.* Give me *Repentance unto life, never to be repented of*, never to be retracted again. Bring me to the *Blood* of *Jeſus*, which cleanſeth from *all ſin.* Behold the ſighings of a contrite Spirit: For *I acknowledg my Tranſgreſſions unto thee, againſt whom I have ſinned: O Lord, forgive the Iniquity of my*

my Sin. I am unworthy to lift up my Hands and Eyes towards Heaven, unworthy to be called thy Son, or thy Servant: I am vile in mine own eyes, becauſe I have made my ſelf vile in thine. For this I am troubled, and mourn, and my Soul is grieved within me.

O thou *Heavenly Phyſician* of Souls! from thy *Pity* alone I expect my cure. I am miſerable and undone without thy Compaſſion; and expect no relief but from the Treaſure of thy Grace. I muſt periſh, and ſink under the burden of Sin, if thy merciful hand do not ſave me, and lift me up. I am intangled and inſnar'd by the Devil and my Luſts, and without thy Succour can never hope to get free. *O Lord forgive my Sin, and heal my Soul: Deliver and ſave me for thy Mercies ſake.*

May I not yet *hope in thy Mercy?* Thou haſt mercifully born with me hitherto: thou calleſt me to repent; thou commandeſt me to return, and promiſeſt to forgive thoſe Sins which are confeſſed and forſaken: O do not caſt me out of thy Sight and Preſence, now I deſire from the bottom of my Heart to return to thee! *I abhor my ſelf in duſt and aſhes*, for my paſt Iniquities. But *alas!* ſuch is the hardneſs of my Impenitent Heart, that I am even

aſham'd of my humbleſt Repentance: how much more may God deſpiſe and reject it? But haſt thou not given thy Bleſſed Son to dye for Sinners? and exalted him to this very end, to be *a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance, and Remiſſion of Sins?* And by the word of thy Grace, thou beſeecheſt all, (even the Greateſt Sinners) to accept of mercy; and art *more willing* to pardon, than we can be to Repent. 'Tis thy Delight and Glory, agreeable to thy Nature, and declared Name, *as a God gracious, and merciful, ſlow to Anger; and of great Kindneſs, forgiving Iniquity, Tranſgreſſion, and Sin.* O Pardon mine *Iniquity* for it is *great*; and receive *an humble Penitent*, who implores thy Grace, according to the Tenor of thy *new Covenant*, flying to the arms of thy Mercy, through the merits of *Jeſus Chriſt, who is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come unto God by him.*

Lord, hear my *Prayer*, and let not the mixture of my weakneſſes and unworthineſs turn it into Sin: but graciouſly vouchſafe to look upon *a returning Prodigal*; and cauſe me to hear the voice of Joy and Gladneſs, that my ſorrowful Heart may be comforted, and my life be directed to thy Praiſe. Lead me into the path of life, that I may no longer err from the way of thy Com-

Commandments: Teach me to do thy Will, O God, and write thy Law upon my Heart, that I may never more *return to Folly.* I am convinc't of the Evil of Sin, of thy Right to govern me, of the Equity and Juſtice of thy Law, of the ſweetneſs and rewards of keeping thy precepts: O ſanctifie my Heart, and make me *Sound in thy Statutes*, that I may hate every falſe way, and be devoted to thy Fear, the remainder of my Life.

If there be any *particular Luſt*, or Wickedneſs, which through the power of Temptation, and the deceitfulneſs of Sin you have fallen into; that hath waſted Conſcience, and rob'd you of your Peace, and provok't God to write *bitter things* againſt you; be ſure to humble your ſelf without delay in an eſpecial manner for *that* Backſliding: Confeſs it freely, with its aggravations. Conſider whether it was not after ſome ſpecial manifeſtation of God's Love, after ſome ſpecial warning, ſome ſtrong Conviction, under or ſoon after ſome great Affliction from God, or ſome more than ordinary kindneſs of his Providence, *&c.* And impreſs ſuch Thoughts, to humble your ſelf the lower, ſearch into the grounds and cauſes of ſuch Apoſtacy, ſuch as the abatement of your Watch-

Watchfulneſs, the neglect of ſerious cloſet Devotion, making bold with Temptation, too great compliance with vain Company, venturing too far in lawful or indifferent Things, too much Confidence in your own Wiſdom, Strength, and ſtedfaſtneſs, not fearing ſufficiently the Approaches and Beginnings of Sin, or avoiding the fuel, incentives, and occaſions of it, *&c.* Palliate and diſguiſe nothing, that may make your ſin exceeding ſinful, *leſt* by ſome little Art of the Devil, you deceive your ſelf by an half-Repentance; and the *Evil Spirit*, you think to be caſt out, return again with *ſeven* worſe than himſelf, and ſo your latter end be worſe than your Beginning. For if the ſin be not truly hated, but only cover'd over with penitential Aſhes, it will quickly flame out again, when it meets with combuſtible matter, and a ſtrong blaſt of Temptation.

But if you are griev'd to the very Heart, and abhor the Sin, and reſolve to quit it, you need not doubt of God's readineſs to receive you to Mercy. His Spirit is yet ſtriving with you, if you are willing to Repent, and return to God. He ſought you, and call'd you to return, when you were wandring as a loſt ſheep in the broad way; and can you think, he will not be found

found of you, if you ſeek him with your whole Heart? Therefore *renew* your *Repentance*, and beg more earneſtly a Spirit of Humility, Holy Fear, and Watchfulneſs: And every morning implore Divine ſuccours againſt that Sin, and all *Temptations* to it. (*Which*, as much as poſſible, you muſt avoid.) Conſtant and fervent *Prayer*, after Repentance, muſt be your refuge, and your Remedy. If you let fall your hands, this *Amalek* will prevail again: As ſoon and as far as you fail in the conſtancy, and fervency of *that Duty*, your Sin will get ſtrength, and ſucceſsfully attempt you another Time. But by this practiſe, God may turn Evil to work for Good, make you gain by your loſs, ſtand the faſter by your Falls, and become ſtronger by the diſcovery of your weakneſs, and ſo be better eſtabliſht for the future.

But take heed that you pervert not the *Grace* of God, and encourage your ſelf to ſin again by the *ſuppoſition*, that if you ſhould *Fall*, 'tis but to *Repent*, and renew your *Reſolutions*, and all will be well. This is a ſubtle Artifice of Satan, but ſuch methinks, as ſhould take with none, who have ever known by *Experience*, what it is to *Repent*. Who have felt the burden of Sin to be heavier than *a Millſtone*; than

Luke 23. c. 30. 17. c. 2. the

the weight of *a Mountain*. Who have taſted, *how evil and bitter a thing it is, to depart from God.* Who have loathed and abhorr'd themſelves, with deep Remorſe, and Sorrow, and Anguiſh of Spirit: wiſhing with all their Hearts, that they had not ſinn'd; and if it were in their power would give all the world to retrieve it; and would rather dye than commit that Folly *again*, they then repented of. Let thoſe who have not *their own* Experience to confirm this, read over (and conſider the caſe of *David*, when he wrote) the Penitential Pſalms. How many like him have roar'd and cried out under the ſenſe of ſin, of ſtings and furies in their Conſcience, of the poiſon'd Arrows in their Souls, and his Terrors ſurrounding them whereever they went: from the ſenſe of ſins Malignity, the apprehenſions of God's Anger, and the conſeqnent Fears of his Wrath. *Serious Repentance* after great Tranſgreſſions is *another Thing* than moſt imagine it. When their aggravated Sins ſhall beſet them behind, and before, be placed in order before their eyes, and ſet in array againſt them. 'Tis always a work of *Difficulty* as well as Importance, to crucifie corrupt affections, to tear a beloved Luſt from the Heart, with ſelf-indignation to abhor and caſt

caſt away what before you lov'd and delighted in. How did *David's Sin* ſtare him in the Face? *it is continually with me, it is ever before me*, ſaith He. It haunted him like a Spectre, or like *Belſhazzar*'s hand-writing on the wall, it ſtill appear'd before him in ſome horrid ſhape.

However *Sin* may ſmile in its firſt addreſs, and beſpeak us in flattering language, and promiſe Pleaſure, and Profit, and great Advantages and Satisfaction; theſe are but fair Appearances; This is but the *outſide* of the Cup, and the colour of the Liquor: it will prove Gall and Wormwood, and a mixture of deadly Poiſon, if ever God ſet it home upon the Conſcience, and awaken us to a true ſenſe of it. And the Continuance of *dayly Repentance* for Sin, which all Chriſtians are called to, is no ſuch eaſy matter neither. Conſtant ſelf-abaſement and Humiliation before God, from a ſenſe of his Majeſty and Holineſs, and of our many Sins, and pollution thereby: The imperfection of our beſt duties continually to be bewailed; inordinate affections to be ſtill mortified; always reſiſting and oppoſing Sin, in its Root and and Branches; conflicting againſt the whole Intereſt of the Fleſh, the World, and the Devil; ſeeking after more Holineſs;

neſs; to be deriv'd unto us by the Grace of Chriſt, to be wrought in us by his Spirit, and maintain'd by his Power; and making dayly applications to the *Fountain* of all Grace, for ſpiritual ſtrength, to continue our warfare againſt Sin, in all Inſtances of outward duty, and inward Actings of Grace, even as long as we live; all this is included in it. Due Apprehenſions concerning *Repentance*, as ſo comprehenſive and difficult a Duty, would teach us to beware of *Sin*.

XXVII.

The neceſſity of Chriſtian Reſolution *to Upright, Perſevering Obedience; how* full *and* extenſive *it ought to be, and yet* humble; *by what* means *we may be aſſiſted to* perform *that which we* reſolve.

HAving acknowledg'd my tranſgreſſions unto God, and begg'd forgiveneſs, and experimentally learnt *the Evil of Sin* by the bitterneſs of Repentance, *I reſolve* for the future to watch againſt it more narrowly, and againſt every thing that leads to it; endeavouring to pleaſe and honour my God and Saviour by an upright, obedient Heart and Life. And for the remiſſion of my

my former contracted Guilt, I truſt to *Jeſus Chriſt*, according to the Revelation made in the Goſpel, of what he is, hath done, and ſuffer'd, and continues to do in Heaven, for the Salvation of repenting Sinners, who deſire to come unto God by Him.

But how often, O *my Soul!* have I mock'd God, and deceiv'd my ſelf, with formal and faint Purpoſes of Amendment? My good Reſolutions have been all of them *as the morning Cloud, and the early Dew, which quickly paſſed away.* One freſh aſſault of Temptation hath ſwept away all my good Purpoſes as a Spider's Web. I have falſified ſo many, and broke my word ſo often, that I dare not truſt to any thing I now reſolve, or rely on any promiſe I ſhould farther make. Succor me therefore, O Lord, by thy powerful Grace, that what was defective in my former fruitleſs Reſolutions, may be now rectified. Let me be more humble in the ſenſe of my weakneſs, more dependant on thy Grace, and more heartily ſeek it from time to time. *Strengthen me with Strength in my Soul, with Might and Power in my inward man*, that I may ſo *reſolve* and *purpoſe*, as to *perform*; that I may not be one day *hot*, and the next *cold*; zealous in the *Beginning*, but faint and lukewarm in the *Progreſs*; fervent and ſerious only in *Reſolving*,

ſolving, but weak and impotent in the *Execution*.

Having chang'd my *Maſter*, my *End*, and my *Hopes*, by returning unto God, from whom I had gone aſtray, I firmly *reſolve*, through the aſſiſtance of his Grace, to change my Courſe of Life; that Old things being done away, all things may become New; that * *being made free from ſin*, by pardoning Mercy, *and become the ſervant of Chriſt, I may have my fruit unto Holineſs, that my End may be Eternal Life.* In the *interim, whether I live or die, let it be unto the Lord*, reſolving both in Life and Death to be abſolutely His. And to that purpoſe, *O my Soul!* let me ſeek for continual ſupplies of Grace from Chriſt my Head, to enable me to yield ready Obedience, in the moſt difficult, hazardous, painful, and humbling Duties. In vain do I reſolve it, without the aſſiſtance of his mighty Power, to ſtrengthen my Heart and Hands, whenever I am called to ſuch a trial of my Sincerity. Without it I ſhall never recover my Liberty, or break aſunder thoſe Bonds and Cords wherewith I have formerly been held Captive, as the Servant of Sin and Satan. Such is the Weakneſs and Treache-

* *Rom. 6. v. 22.*

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ry of my own Heart, the influence of ill Examples, and the ſubtlety and cunning of the Tempter, that otherwiſe I ſhall quickly change my mind, and *return to Folly, as the Dog to his Vomit.* The Spirit is ſo weak, and the Fleſh ſo frail; the Snares of the World ſo many, the Power of remaining Corruption ſo ſtrong; and of my ſelf I am ſo unſettled and wavering, fickle and unſteady, and prone to backſliding, that all my ſtrongeſt purpoſes will not be ſufficient, without daily ſtrength from above. My Senſes are ſo deceitful; my Paſſions ſo ungovernable; the Rule and Law I am to walk by, ſo ſtrict, and ſpiritual, and extenſive: Criminal Omiſſions may be ſo frequent, and ſo eaſily overlook'd; ſo many ſeveral and difficult Duties are to be performed; and by every change of my Condition, or of God's Providence, ſo many new Dangers and new Duties may ariſe, that I fear the iſſue of my firmeſt Reſolutions. So ſtrict a Watch muſt always be kept; ſuch Humility and Caution is everywhere to be practis'd; ſuch ſpeedy Repentance requir'd after every fall; with thankfulneſs and contentment in every State, under all Calamities, be they never ſo many, or never ſo pinching; and perſeverance herein abſolutely neceſſary, though never ſo

many

many Stratagems be uſed to diſcourage me from proceeding, or to entice me to go back, or turn aſide to ſome other Path; inſomuch that if God had not promiſed me his continued Preſence, and that his *Grace ſhall be ſufficient for me*, and *that I ſhall not be tempted above what I am able to bear*; I ſhould utterly *deſpair* of making *good* what I now *reſolve*.

But beſides theſe *Promiſes* to encourage my Reſolved Obedience, he hath left upon Record in his Word many glorious *Examples* of his aſſiſting and rewarding the Courage and Reſolution of his Servants to continue faithful; as in the caſe of *Joſeph*, *Daniel*, and his *Three Friends*, &c. If Chriſt ſtand by, and ſtrengthen me, I know *I ſhall be able to do all things*; I ſhall not *then* be flatter'd, or frighted out of the way of my Duty; no Wind that can blow ſhall *then* turn me to another Point; nothing ſhall *then* be able to prevail for my conſent to a wilful and deliberate forſaking of God; no Argument, no Temptation, though Privacy, Opportunity, Impunity from Men, with Rewards of Worldly Gain and Honour, ſhould all concur to enforce a Temptation. But, by that Heavenly Aſſiſtance, I ſhall be preſerv'd Humble, Temperate, Chaſt, Patient, Thankful, Self-denying, Cruci-

Crucified to the World, and *hold fast my Integrity till I die*; ſtill *perfecting Holineſs in the fear of God, growing in Grace, and in the Knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*, waxing ſtronger from day to day, be ſeldomer ſurpriz'd, offend leſs, and repent more quickly, and watch more narrowly afterwards, till at laſt I receive the Crown.

Eſpecially, let me watch againſt my *Conſtitution* Sins, ſuch as I am moſt inclined to, and where a Temptation doth moſt eaſily enter; where the Devil can take the faſteſt hold, and be leaſt ſuſpected; where he hath *formerly* ſprung a Mine, and made a Breach: I have known ſome humble watchful Chriſtians, after being recovered from their Backſlidings, who abhorr'd every Temptation to *that ſin*, by which they had been defiled and wounded: they can hardly put up a Prayer, but they mention it; hardly have their hearts affected in any ordinance, but they are inwardly aſham'd of it; hardly hear of any one guilty of the like, but they are ready to burſt out into Tears.

Fix therefore, I beſeech thee, *moſt Gracious God!* my unfeigned *Reſolutions* of cleaving to thee, *with full purpoſe of Heart:* and ſhew thy ſtrength in my weakneſs, by inabling me to *do* what I now *reſolve*. To

that

that end, teach me to watch over *my Heart*, to keep it with all diligence, to be more converſant with my own Thoughts, examining the motions that ariſe in my Heart, whence they come, and whither they go, and what they tend to, that I may ſuppreſs the *beginnings* of Sin. The unſearchable *Deceitfulneſs* of the Heart, the rovings, ſtraglings and wandrings of the *Thoughts*, the ungovernable motions and ſtirrings of the *Paſſions* and Affections, with the *corrupt Inclinations* that are ready to comply with Temptation, make ſuch a conſtant Watchfulneſs neceſſary. Let me live no longer as a ſtranger to my ſelf, but by *Self-reflexion* dwell more at home, reckoning my principal Work to be within doors, to keep my own Vineyard. Teach me to watch over my *Senſes*, to guard the door of my *Lips*, to govern my *Paſſions*; to be wary in the *Choice* of my Company, and in the Right *Uſe* of it; to be Circumſpect in every ſtep of my daily walk, to call my ſelf frequently to a Reckoning, to caſt up my Accounts at the foot of every page, by *every days* review of my Actions, to live always as in God's preſence, and be awed every where by the thought of his *Holy Eye*, to ſhun the occaſions and appearances of Evil, *&c.*

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By the neglect of this, Spiritual Diſtempers will inſenſibly creep upon us. There is ſuch a venom and malignity in Sin, to wound and weaken the Soul, to put us off the Hinges, to diſorder and unfit us for any Spiritual Service, to make our Hearts vain and frothy, lazy and liſtleſs, that we ſhall eaſily let ſlip our Opportunities, loſe our Seaſons, and languiſh and pine away, notwithſtanding all the means of thriving and growth. And hence it is that ſo many Profeſſors mourn and complain, lick the duſt, and lye among the clods, are dead under the moſt awakening Miniſtry, and barren under the moſt fruitful means. Hence it is they do little Good, as well as taſte little Comfort; ſome duties are neglected, and others perform'd ſlightly; and in none of them do they meet with that Sweetneſs and Satisfaction, that Refreſhment, and Advanvantage, Fruit and Benefit, as formerly. And all from the neglect of *Watchfulneſs*, making bold with Temptation, and not ſtanding upon their Guard in the uſe of their Chriſtian Armour.

And becauſe no Place, no Condition, no Imployment is exempted from *Temptations*, let me fortify my ſelf every morning againſt all Aſſaults for that day, by Serious Prayer,

Prayer, as Holy *David* was wont to do. *My voice* (ſaith he) *ſhalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my Prayer unto thee, and will look up*, Pſal. 5. v. 3, 4. Let the Law of God be my daily and delightful ſtudy: that I may be able preſently to bring my Words and Actions to the Touchſtone; and know how to manage *the ſword of the Spirit*, on all occaſions, *againſt the fiery Darts of the Devil*: that knowing the rule, I may not be doubtful, or at a loſs, when ever I am tempted: I may not make a ſtand to *parley*, but immediately ſummon all my forces to Reſiſt, and reject the Snare; being aſſur'd from God, that the Continuance of this Warfare ſhall end in a moſt Glorious Victory. *He will ſhortly tread down Satan under my feet. Thanks be to God, through Jeſus Chriſt, my Lord.*

XXVIII.

XXVIII.

The Import, and Obligation of our Baptiſmal Covenant. *The renewal of it by a ſolemn* Dedication *of our ſelves to* God *the* Father, Son, *and* Holy Spirit, *exemplify'd and recommended.*

ALL this, *O my Soul*, which I have now reſolv'd on, is no more than what I am obliged to, by my Vow in Baptiſm; to renounce the *Devil* and his Works, the *Fleſh* and the Luſts thereof, the World, and conformity to it, that I may Love and Serve the Lord: agreeable to the undoubted Right which God hath in me by Creation, Redemption, and his inuumerable other Benefits. But *the outword waſhing of Baptiſm*, and a viſible profeſſion of obedience, *will not ſave me, without the Anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God*; 1 Pet. cap. 3. v. 21. May I not by the conſideration of my Baptiſmal Covenant ſuppoſe God ſpeaking to my Conſcience, to this effect? "Will "you take *me* for your whole Portion and "Felicity? and my Law for the conſtant "Rule of your obedience? and fight a-"gainſt the World, the Fleſh, and the "Devil, to your lives end? Will you be-

" lieve in *Jesus Christ*, and receive him as a " Prince and Saviour? and adhere to the " faith and obedience of the Gospel, how " hazardous and difficult soever the profes- " sion and practice of it may be? Will you " receive the *Blessed Spirit* as your Teacher, " Sanctifier, and Comforter? and cherish " all his Motions, to inlighten, purify, " confirm, comfort, and assist you? 'Tis my hearty consent to *these Terms*, and re- solved compliance with them, which Bap- tism obligeth to; and *this is the Answer of a good Conscience towards God.*

I have often renewed *this Covenant* on se- veral occasions; but did I ever duly con- sider the tenor and obligation of it? How have I lyed unto the God of Truth? dealt deceitfully with him? and been False and Fickle, Treacherous and Unfaithful to what I promised? O let me now again repeat it, and give up my self once more to be the Lord's, more unfeignedly, more firmly than ever I have hitherto done! that the Bonds of God upon me may be strengthned, and my Soul more throughly ingag'd to be the Lord's. O help me to do it with the greatest seriousness, as the most important Affair of my whole Life! by thine aid and Grace *alone* shall I be sincere and cordial in this sur- render, and Dedication of my self. O breathe

upon

upon my Soul, moſt Holy Spirit, (*the Power of the Higheſt*) that there may be no Hypocriſie, or Reſervation, in this ſo weighty and ſolemn Tranſaction between God and me!

O moſt Bleſſed and Glorious TRINITY! Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Thy favor is my Life, and thy Lovingkindneſs is better than Life: Thy Will ſhould have been my Rule, thy Word my Law, thy Glory my end, to pleaſe thee my principal Buſineſs, and to injoy thy Love and Preſence my ultimate Felicity. But I am one of thy *revolted Creatures*, who have loſt thine Image, and rebell'd againſt thy Law, ſlighted thy Authority, and rejected thy Grace, and deſerve to be caſt out of thy ſight, and baniſht from thy Preſence for ever. Nevertheleſs, *O moſt merciful God, and Father*, upon thy gracious invitation and call, I now return to thee my rightful Lord: acknowledging thee, as my Almighty, Wiſe, and bountiful Creator, my abſolute Owner, my Righteous Governour, my End, my Happineſs and Chief Good. I *now* accept thine offer'd Mercy; I *now* ſubmit to the Scepter of thy Grace; and give up my ſelf to Thee, as my King, and my God; to rule and ſanctify me now, and be my Everlaſting Portion. I deſire to be no longer

my own, but *Thine*, to whom of right I belong, and ought to be devoted. I yield my ſelf to Thee, *O my Lord!* Accept and poſſeſs that which is thine own. I lay my ſelf at thy Foot, at all Times, and in all Conditions, to be at thy diſpoſe, and in every thing to acquieſce in thy Good Pleaſure. Deliberately reſolving, with unfeigned and free conſent of my Will, to walk before Thee in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs all the days of my Life. Hereby I conſecrate and devote my ſelf to be thy perpetual Avowed Servant: *Lord, I am thy ſervant, I am thy ſervant, the Son of thine Handmaid.* Though other Lords have had dominion over me, I will now make mention of thy Name, and of thy Righteouſneſs *only*, by Jeſus Chriſt.

O Bleſſed Jeſus, my All-ſufficient Saviour! Thy dying Love, infinite Condeſcention, and matchleſs Grace hath at laſt overcome me, and conſtrain'd me to reſolve to be wholly *Thine*, who haſt redeem'd and bought me with thy moſt precious Blood. I now acknowledg and own Thee, as *my Lord, and my Jeſus*, my Prophet, Prieſt, and King; my Sacrifice, Surety, and Ranſom, to ſatisfy for my Sins, and reconcile me unto God, to inſtruct me in his Will, and teach me the Myſteries of his Kingdom, and the way

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to the Father. How often haſt thou open'd thine arms, and called me, yea beſeecht me to come unto thee, and accept of Life? but I refuſed to come. I adore thy merciful Condeſcention, that yet thou wilt receive me on ſuch eaſy Terms. O thou Lord of Life and Glory, now accept of an unworthy helpleſs Sinner, who flies to Thee as his only Refuge and Hope! who is convinc't, that *None but Chriſt*, *None but Chriſt* can make his Peace with God, and ſave from wrath to come. I acknowledg thy Title to me, and my obedience, and to all I have, by dying for me. I deſire to take thy Yoke upon me, for it is Eaſie; and thy Burthen, which is Light. I deſire to be intirely, and for ever thine, *in an Everlaſting Covenant*, *never to be broken:* to take up the Croſs, and follow thee, whitherſoever thou ſhalt lead me; through the ſtraight Gate, and the *narrow* way. I will reſerve no Luſt, refuſe no Labour, grudge at no Suffering, ſtick at no difficulty, ſo I may pleaſe, and honour thee, and continue in thy Love. O ſhed abroad more of thy Love in my Heart, to make all Things eaſie for his ſake, *who hath loved me, and waſhed me from my Sins in his own Blood.*

O God the Holy Ghoſt, I acknowledg Thee as my Great *Teacher* and *Sanctifier*, and give

up my ſelf to Thee, as the Author of all ſaving Knowledg and Holineſs: By Thee I have been convinc't of my Sin, againſt the Law of God, and the Goſpel of Chriſt, and of my neceſſity of his Merit, Satisfaction, and Righteouſneſs, to juſtify my guilty Soul, by procuring the Forgiveneſs of Sin, and my acceptance with God; and of the freeneſs of his Love, the Riches and alſufficiency of his Grace, towards all who come unto God by Him. I adore Thee, *O moſt Bleſſed Spirit*, as proceeding, and ſent from the Father and the Son, to renew all the Powers of my Soul, and reſtore the Divine Image there; to enlighten my mind, to know and receive the Truth, *as it is in Jeſus*, and purify my Heart: and to ſanctify all the Members of my Body, and make them Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs unto Holineſs, which before were Servants unto Sin; and gradually to deliver me from the power, the defilement, and abode of Sin; as from the Guilt and Puniſhment by the Blood of Jeſus. And as the *Witneſs* of God to the Truth of the Holy Scriptures; and as the Great *Paraclete*, to comfort and eſtabliſh the Hearts of Believers, ſealing them up to the day of Redemption, and giving them the Earneſt of the Heavenly Inheritance. *O bleſſed Spirit*,

rit, be thou my *Witneſs*, that though I have violated the Law of God, and defac'd his Image, and formerly undervalu'd the Love of Chriſt, and the Grace of the Goſpel, yet by thine Aid, I *now* accept what I have ſo long neglected: and thankfully devote my ſelf henceforward to be the Lord's in a Covenant Relation.

But fearing and diſtruſting my ſelf, I give up my ſelf entirely to the conduct of *thy Grace*, depending upon it for my eſtabliſhment and perſeverance. O form my Heart into an obediential Frame! that in every thing I may endeavor to anſwer the *Ends* and *Obligations* of this Devoted State.

To this *One God* I have once again dedicated and reſign'd my ſelf; to ſerve, and pleaſe, and honour Thee, in Thought, Word, and Act, to the laſt moment of my Life: in the Performance of all *Duties*, even thoſe which I have been moſt averſe from; in the mortification of every *Luſt*, and the forſaking of every *Sin*, even thoſe which I was once moſt addicted to: Reſolving deliberately to allow my ſelf in nothing, great or little, ſecret or open, which I ſhall know or believe to be contrary to thy holy Will; making it my buſineſs to be fruitful in good Works, to the praiſe of my Redeemer;

waiting in the use of all his appointed means for higher measures of Grace and Holiness, to be more victorious over inward Lusts, and outward Temptations, still *pressing towards the mark for the prize of my high and holy Calling*, even Eternal Life.

I call Heaven and Earth, *O Lord*, to witness this day, That I own and avow this to be my *Mind*, and the *setled Prevailing Purpose* of my Soul. This I again ratifie and confirm, without any Clauses, or Exceptions. *So help me, O my God.* Glory be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

XXIX.

Practical and Consolatory Reflections *on the preceding* Self-dedication, *or* Covenant *with God.*

I Have this day solemnly avouched the Lord to be my God, to walk in his ways; thereby to fortifie my Resolutions, that *I and my* * *House*, (and All that I can perswade to be of my mind) *will serve the Lord.* I intend, desire, and hope never will-

* Deut. 6. c. 17, 18.

fully

fully to violate the *Faith*, which I have now plighted in the presence of God; but to continue *stedfast*, *unmoveable*, *always abounding in the work of the Lord*, &c.

Should I undertake any new Imployment, or enter into any new Condition, or change the place of my Abode, where I might see more of God's dishonour, and meet with more and stronger Temptations to Sin, and be called to the performance of more difficult duties, greater watchfulness and self-denial, *&c.* I would hope hereby to ingage the presence of God with me, and his Blessing on all my Affairs, (on which depends the success of all that I undertake:) and would hope the better to preserve my Integrity, not only *This Year*, but in all the remaining portion of my Time, by the abiding sense of my *Covenant* with God; thus seriously renewed.

This is the method I have been often advis'd to, for *Peace of Conscience*, under doubts and scruples concerning my spiritual State: to put the matter out of doubt, by *again* accepting the offered mercy and Grace of the Gospel; and heartily consenting to the new Covenant: giving up my self to God in Christ, to be ruled and saved by him. Blessed be God, I have now done

ſo. *Lord*, ſay *Amen* to thy part of the Covenant, that Thou art and wilt *be my God*; as I deſire unfeignedly to do to mine, that I will be *thy Servant*.

But becauſe Articles are ſooner conſented to, than made good; (tho I ſeriouſly intend never to diſown this my ſolemn Act and Deed, but firmly to adhere to it as long as I live; that *having ſworn, I will endeavour to perform it*, that this ſhall be my Everlaſting Choice, never to be recanted or alter'd, yet) conſidering the ſad Inſtances of my former weakneſs, and the vigilance and ſubtle malice of my Great Adverſary, I again implore the ſuccour of *Divine Grace*, to keep it for ever in the purpoſe of my Heart, that it may be *as the Laws of the Medes and Perſians*, never to be reverſed. I have given up my name to be Thine; *O put thy fear into my Heart, that I may never depart from Thee!* Imprint thy Laws upon my Heart, that my obedience may be uniform and univerſal, unwavering and perpetual; ſuitable to ſo honourable and near a Relation to Thee! I am ſenſible I want *Wiſdom* and *Strength* to that purpoſe, but thou haſt bid me ask it of Thee, *who giveſt liberally*, to All without deſert, *and upbraideſt not*, with preſent unworthineſs, or former faults. *O lead me*

not into Temptation, but deliver me from Evil. Stand by and Strengthen me in the Hour of *Trial*, leſt I forget my vows, and deny Thee. O that *my Soul* may never draw back, leſt *Thine* have no Pleaſure in me. I can ſerve no better Maſter; O let mine Ears be bored to the door of thine houſe, as the Token and Aſſurance of my being thy Servant unto Death. I know 'tis my Duty, I am ſenſible 'tis my Privilege and Honour; I am convinc'd, that 'tis my Intereſt and Felicity; my *Soul*, my *Life*, my *preſent* and *everlaſting Welfare*, and *All* depends upon it, that thou ſhouldſt be *my God for ever*: O conduct me by thy Holy Spirit of Grace, that I may walk and act, as having heartily conſented he ſhould be ſo: and *direct my Heart into thy Love, and the faithful keeping of thy Commandments.* That when ſo many Profeſſors make ſhipwrack of Faith, and a Good Conſcience, and diſcredit the Religion of my Lord, by their ſhameful Falls, thou mayſt make me to ſtand, and improve the warning of their Examples, to walk humbly; and *while I ſtand, to take heed leaſt I fall.*

Having thus ſurrendred my ſelf to God, what is there, *O my Soul!* that is ever like to prevail with me to go back, and revolt from him? Is the gratification of a *Luſt*, the

the ſecuring of an *Eſtate*, compliance with a *Friend*, the pleaſing of a *Superior*, living in *Eaſe* and *Honour*, and outward *Proſperity* for a little while, the ſaving my Body from *Suffering*, or my life from *Violence*, (or what ever elſe be the Motive of my unfaithfulneſs to God, and Apoſtacy from Him) Is *Any*, is *All* of theſe any way conſiderable, compared with *the Bleſſedneſs of having God to be my God?* For thereby I have the forgiveneſs of all my Sins; and the Aſſurance of his Favour; the certainty of preſent Protection, and Proviſion; all Creatures reconciled to me, and to be imployed for my Good, as the Friend of God; All things to work together for my Advantage; and by the evidence of my Adoption, a well grounded Hope of Eternal Life. *God as my Sun and Shield, will give Grace and Glory, and with-hold no Good Thing.* So unſpeakably Comprehenſive are the Priviledges of ſo near a Relation to God in Chriſt. *O happy are the People who are in ſuch a caſe! Bleſſed are the Perſons whoſe God is the Lord.*

Do I *reſolve* to abide by my Choice, and to truſt in Chriſt, for perſevering Grace? and ſhall I not, *ought I not* to take *Comfort* in it? Shall I not give God the Glory of his *infinite Goodneſs*, by adhering to him, and re-

rejoycing in him, notwithſtanding all Temptations to the Contrary? Caſting all my Care upon him, and quieting my ſelf in the Alſufficiency of my Heavenly Father: having a *God in Covenant*, who will ſupply all my wants, and take care of me as *his own.* Shall I not give him the glory of his *Truth and Power*, by truſting him in every Condition? By confidence in his Promiſe, Dependance on his Word, Faithfulneſs to his Intereſt, and Conſtancy in his Service to the end? Is it not a moſt encouraging Thought, That *God doth never Abandon any, who do not firſt forſake him?* And after ſuch ſtrict Engagements, as I have laid upon my ſelf, ſhall I ever ſtrike the fatal ſtroke with my own Hand? Shall I be off and on, ſay and unſay, promiſe and retract? And after I have proceeded thus far, ſhall I forſake the Fountain of Living Waters, and turn again to broken Ciſterns?

After I have examin'd my ſelf, conſider'd my ways, confeſt my Sins, and upon ſerious Deliberation am come to a *Reſolve*, and in purſuance of it have devoted my ſelf with ſuch ſolemnity to be the Lord's, ſhall I ever after this, *forſake Him, and my own Mercies, and lightly eſteem the Rock of my Salvation?* Now I have learn'd in ſome mea-

measure what *Sin* is, by the ſorrows and anguiſh of an Hearty *Repentance*; now I have diſcovered ſo much of the Snares and Devices of *Satan*, whereby I have formerly been betraid: now I am ſenſible of the dangerous and powerful influence and infection of *bad Company*; the Treachery of fleſhly Luſts; the bewitching Temptations of the World; and have taſted a little, by my own Experience, of the Pleaſantneſs of Wiſdom's Paths, the Peace and Satisfaction of Devotedneſs to God, by the preſent Rewards of a calm Conſcience, the communications of Divine Grace, and the Encouragement of an Holy Hope, *&c.* and am perſuaded of the Stability of his Word, and the Certainty of Eternal Life to all who continue in well-doing; ſhall I, *after all this*, ever break with God again? Shall I ever cancel this Engagement? violate this my Vow? and falſifie ſo many repeated Promiſes and Reſolutions? Oh that his Power may reſt upon me! and his Grace work in me both to will and to do! *that this God may be my God for ever, and my Guide unto Death.* Let me never reaſſume this Gift, and Surrender of my ſelf, or defraud God of his Right and Propriety. *His I am, and Him I will ſerve:* living wholly to Him; uſing all I have for him: being willing

willing he ſhould *do what he liſt with his own*, and conſequently diſpoſe of me; and of all that any way belongs to me, *as ſhall ſeem Good in his Eyes.* I am *Thine*, O Lord ſave me. Command me my work, appoint me my Duty, direct my Station, order my Condition. Let me be Thine, tho imployed in the meaneſt ſervice, and the moſt laborious ſelf-denying work. Tho I ſhould be but *a Doorkeeper in thine Houſe, an Hewer of Wood, or a Drawer of water*; Tho I muſt pinch the fleſh, and ſwim againſt the Tide, and renounce what before I valued: yet *This God ſhall be my God for ever.*

By this means when I come to Dye, (if God ſhould add more years to the little number I have paſt, beſides this I have now begun) I may be able to ſay with Upright *Hezekiah, Remember Lord, how I have walked before Thee in mine Integrity.* That in the face of Death, and the Grave, in the view of another World, and the near proſpect of Eternity, I may be able to Rejoyce in Hope, and Say, *Lord Jeſus, Receive my Spirit.* Thou art my Saviour, and I have waited for thy Salvation. I have ſought Thee with my whole Heart; I have choſen thy Favour rather than Worldly Grandeur and Proſperity; I have prized thy

thy *Love*, and endeavour'd to obey Thee, (as the beſt Expreſſion of my own) tho with many Imperfections, which I bewail; I have delighted more in thy Service and Preſence, than in the Pleaſures of Sin and vanity; thy Teſtimonies have been the Joy of my Heart; I took no delight in the Company of the ungodly, after I was devoted to Thee; O let me not have my Portion with them in the other World! Fortifie me now againſt the King of Terrors, ſtrengthen me in this my laſt Conflict, enable me to triumph over Death by the Croſs of Chriſt, (*my victorious Redeemer*) and carry me through the dark valley, at the divorce of Soul and Body; and grant me an abundant entrance into thine heavenly Kingdom; Let me be numbred among thy Choſen, and my Body wait in Hope, 'till the general Reſurrection, that I may then ſee thy Glory, and dwell with Thee for ever.

I gave up my ſelf to Thee, and do not Repent my Choice; acknowledg me now for *Thine*, and do not loſe that which is thy own. *Lord Jeſus!* Thou haſt paid my Ranſom, to deliver me from *Satan*, and from Eternal Wrath, oh do not now reject me, and caſt me off. Is it not thine Office and Covenant to ſave thoſe that Truſt

Truſt in thee? Oh remembr thy Word unto thy Servant, wherein thou haſt cauſed me to Hope, when I ventur'd my Salvation on thy Promiſe, and truſted to thy Gracious Word for Eternal Life. Thy Love hath already overcome the greateſt impediments of my Salvation. 'Tis as eaſie now to receive me, as to Love me. Thou haſt prepared Glory for thy Redeemed ones; and haſt bid me believingly to follow thee, and wait for thy Salvation. Thou haſt begotten me to a lively hope, by the Incorruptible Seed of the Word; Let me not now be depriv'd of the Inheritance. Can that Love that pitied me in my Blood, and fetcht me from the Gates of Hell, now ſuffer me to fall into it? Oh Crown thy Grace, and perfect thy Preparatory Mercy, with Everlaſting Mercy.

By voluntary *Conſent* and *Choice*, thou art *my God*; and thy Preſence in Heaven, my ultimate Felicity; I have truſted to thy Gracious Promiſe, to prepare me for it, and bring me to it; *O fulfil thy Word unto thy Servant, wherein thou haſt cauſed me to hope*; and mercifully receive my departing Soul, that ſeeks Thee, that loves Thee, that breathes after Thee, and deſires nothing but to know Thee better, and love Thee more, and be more entirely conform'd

form'd to thine Image, and live always in thy Bleſſed Preſence. Thou haſt called me out of the World, plac'd thine Image upon me, enabled me to make it my Buſineſs, though with many Imperfections, to ſerve, and pleaſe, and honour Thee; Oh Receive me to the fulneſs of thy Love and Grace, and preſent me faultleſs before the Preſence of thy Glory, with exceeding Joy. *Amen, Holy Father, be it unto me according to thy Word; through the Merits and Interceſſion of my Alſufficient Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt, the Faithful and True Witneſs, in whom all thy Promiſes are Yea, and Amen.*

XXX.

Thankſgiving *to God for his Innumerable* Benefits *and* Mercies, *particularly in the* Year Paſt: *with ſome* Direction *and* Advice *concerning it.*

HOW precious and delightful are the Thoughts of thy Benefits? *O Lord, how great is the ſum of them?* Should I count them, they are more in number than the Stars. Shall I not obſerve and conſider them? maintain a grateful ſenſe of them, and publickly acknowledg them on all occaſions? that I may *Bleſs the Lord at all Times,*

Times, and his Praiſe be continually in my mouth. More eſpecially ſhould I *conclude* and *begin the Year*, with ſolemn Praiſes to my Great Benefactor and Preſerver. I ought to begin and cloſe *every Day* with it, thereby *to make the outgoings of the Morning and the Evening to rejoice in God.* Every Year, every Day, every Hour, every Moment offers me an occaſion to praiſe Him: becauſe he is every minute gracious: and hath been ſo ever ſince he gave me my Being.

Almoſt one half of my Time hath been ſpent in *Sleep*, when I *remember* not God, nor my ſelf; yet doth He, who never ſlumbers or ſleeps, remember me in Mercy, and watch over me for good. Yea, though in the other half, by Day, I have *forgotten* him in a worſe ſenſe, by caſting off his Fear, and not remembring that his Holy Eye is upon me, yet hath he not forgotten to be Gracious. Therefore *I will praiſe the name of God with a Song, and will magnify him with Thankſgiving, and never forget his benefits. With which* Sacrifice *he is better pleaſed than with an Ox or Bullock*, that *hath horns and hoofs.*

He hath prolonged my Life *this laſt Year*, when ſo many others, of his more uſeful

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Pſalm 69. *v.* 30.

Ser-

Servants, have been remov'd by Death: and given me farther Time and Space to Repent, when multitudes have been ſurpriz'd in their Impenitence. Yea, *it was He*, who formed me in the Womb, and brought me ſafely into the World, by whoſe Providence I have hitherto been ſupplied: *in Him I live, and move, and continually exiſt*; To his undeſerved Goodneſs I am beholding for all the Good of any kind, which I ever enjoy'd: To his Bounty I am indebted for all that I now have; and muſt depend upon it, for whatever I can hereafter expect.

Through Infancy and Childhood he was pleas'd to preſerve me; favouring me with many advantages in my *Birth* and *Education*; providing for me a Competent Livelihood; diſpoſing the Circumſtances of my *Condition*, Relations, Places of Abode, *&c.* more advantageouſly than he hath done for Thouſands: affording me many Helps, for the Improvement of my mind, and the increaſe of Knowledg: and preventing my Neceſſities, and even my Deſires, with numberleſs Bleſſings, which I never ſo much as askt for. He hath cauſed ſeveral of my *Relations* to yield me Comfort, when they might have been ſore Afflictions. He hath raiſed up *Strangers* to befriend me, and

ſhow

ſhow me kindneſs. How many favours have I receiv'd from God, by the Inſtrumentality of other *Men?* to whom God gave the Will, and the Power, the Opportunity, and the Inclination?

How often hath he *deliver'd my Soul from Death, mine Eyes from Tears, and my Feet from falling,* by ſeaſonable Preſervations? ſo that I do yet *walk before him in the Land of the Living.* He hath reſcu'd me from the brink of many a *Precipice*, which, through Ignorance or Inadvertency, I did not apprehend or Fear. When I knew not which way to turn, he hath made my Path plain. Under ſinking *Diſappointments* he hath commanded Succor; and been *a preſent Help in the time of Trouble.* In Great Perplexities, his Eye hath been my *Guide*, and his own Arm hath brought Salvation: it may be by the Miniſtry of his *Holy Angels*, obeying his order, and giving unuſual Intimations of very great, and otherwiſe unſuſpected Dangers: or ſending Relief and Deliverance, by ſuch ſmall, unlikely, and unexpected Means, as carried the name of *God* viſibly ingraven on them. Innumerable *Calamities* he ſaves me from, which others groan under: and as many *Bleſſings* am I favour'd with, whereof they are deſtitute. He Spreads my Table, and fills my Cup, and gives

gives me *All Things richly to enjoy*, when many Excellent Perſons, of whom the World is not worthy, are fed with *the Bread of Affliction, and the Water of Affliction.* Others have only Neceſſaries, or but few Conveniençies, in Compariſon with the Plentiful Proviſions God hath made, for my Chearful Obedience to Him. And ſhall I not Praiſe Him for (*a*) *the precious Things of Heaven, the bleſſings of the Earth, the dew, and the deep?* and more eſpecially for *the Good-will of Him who dwelt in the Buſh*, to ſanctify and ſweeten all: Whereby Common Mercies become the pledge and fore-runner of better Things; as the fruit of his Special Kindneſs, the witneſs of his Truth, and the ſeed of Peace and Joy, and Righteouſneſs, and Praiſe; by reaſon of his Bleſſing on all that I poſſeſs, which otherwiſe would prove a Snare, and a Temptation, and be intermixt with a Curſe.

And beſides the ordinary and Continued Bounty of every Day, in the midſt of how many *Difficulties* and *Dangers* have I felt the dear obligations of his Preſerving Mercy? abroad and at home; in Foreign Countries, as well as my own; in the

(a) *Deut.* 33. *v.* 13, 14.

midſt

midſt of Enemies, and among Friends; in all Places, and at all Times.

He hath prolonged my *Health*, or made my Bed in *Sickneſs*. He hath often granted the *Deſires* of my Heart when ever it was for his Glory; and contradicted my *Wiſhes*, and diſappointed my Endeavours, in other Inſtances, when it was more to my Advantage. From how many *Miſchiefs* hath he ſav'd me, by ſuch Things as I deprecated, and would have hinder'd? How many Evils hath he turn'd for Good? *He hath heard my Cry in the day of Adverſity, and ſet my feet in a large Place.* He hath Chaſten'd me for my *Profit*: His Rod and his Staff have comforted me: He hath ſpoken comfortably to me in the Wilderneſs. *Affliction* hath been uſeful and neceſſary Phyſick; made an Inſtrument of Vertue, and ſo a token of his Love. Therefore *(a) I will ſing of the Mercy of the Lord for ever, and with the voice of Thanksgiving will I make known his Faithfulneſs.*

He hath all along conducted me by his *Wiſdom*, guided me by his Providence, and *the Angel of his Preſence hath* directed my Path, and ordered all my Goings. He hath been a *Cloud* to me by Day, and a

(a) *Pſalm* 89. *v.* 1.

Pillar

Pillar of *Fire* by Night: he hath helped me in my Straits, and ſupply'd my Wants, and comforted me in all my Sadneſſes: His powerful and gracious *Preſence* hath been my conſtant Guard: and his Sovereign never-failing *Goodneſs* hath compaſt me about with Mercy on every ſide. *For which*, O moſt Merciful Father, *my Soul, and all that is within me, deſires to ſpeak thy Praiſe.*

The advantagious *Circumſtances* of many divine Favors do raiſe their value, and deſerve to be particularly obſerv'd and acknowledged. How *ſuitably*, how *ſeaſonably*, how wiſely hath he conferr'd his Benefits? with what Tenderneſs and Kindneſs? with what Freedom and Readineſs? Of his own bounty and good will, without any Neceſſity, or Obligation on his Part; without any Deſert, and Sometimes without ſo much as a Prayer on mine. And what is more, notwithſtanding my *Ingratitude* and *Forgetfulneſs* of Him, and great Provocations, heightned by the abuſe of ſo much Mercy: demanding nothing after all, in requital of ſo much Kindneſs, but my *Acceptance* of his Love, and grateful ſenſe of his Goodneſs, and the ſweeteſt and moſt reaſonable Expreſſions of it, by *Thankful Obedience.*

More

More *especially*, would I bleſs the Lord, for Inlightning my mind in the Great Myſteries of *Religion:* diſpoſing in wonderful Wiſdom the ſeveral means and methods, whereby he brought me to the *Knowledg of the Truth*, by Parents, Miniſters, Friends, Acquaintance, Books, Afflictions, *&c.* Beginning with me in *Childhood*, awakening and cultivating the inbred Notions of God, and natural Religion, of Good and Evil, Rewards and Puniſhments, by the careful Inſtructions of Parents, or others concern'd in my Education: giving me the advantage of Good Examples, Counſels, and Encouragements, to know and do well; with more aſſiſtance, and leſs hindrances, and diverſions, than to many Others. Particularly, for the Excellent Privilege and ineſtimable Bleſſing of his *Holy Word and Sacraments*; the liberty of the Chriſtian Religion, in the Purity of it, in moſt of thoſe Places, where God has been pleas'd to caſt my Lot. *Cauſing me to lay down in green Paſtures, and leading me beſide the ſtill Waters:* Inſtructing me in the Revelation of his Will and Grace by *Jeſus Chriſt*: acquainting me with the ſublime Principles and Articles, Precepts and Rules, Promiſes and Hopes of the *Goſpel*, in order to Eternal Life.

I bleſs Thee, *O Lord*, and ſhall for ever do ſo, that with any or all theſe Advantages and Helps thy Holy Spirit hath taught me *to know the Truth as it is in Jeſus*, heartily to believe and obey it. That by thy Grace I have been convinc'd of Sin, and brought to Repentance; ſhewing me the neceſſity of a Saviour, to make my peace with Thee, the all-ſufficiency of his Grace, the fulneſs of his Merit, the freeneſs of his Love, and his readineſs to receive me to Mercy, inviting and calling me to it, and enabling me to accept his gracious Invitation, and obey his compaſſionate Call; making me willing, by a *Powerful and Victorious Grace*, drawing me with Cords of Love, and ſo effectually perſuading me to conſent to thy Covenant, and comply with thy Meſſage, on the gracious terms of the Goſpel. *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who, through his abundant Mercy, hath begotten me again to a lively Hope*; having humbled my proud Heart, and conquer'd the perverſeneſs of my ſtubborn Will, and brought my Soul to an entire ſubjection to himſelf: who took pity on me when he ſaw me in my Blood, ſpread his Skirt over me, caſt a Mantle upon my Nakedneſs, waſh'd me from my Sins, and put his own Comlineſs upon me, by Sanctifica-

ctification: who open'd my eyes, when I was leaping blindfold into the Pit of Deſtruction: who healed my Soul, when I was ſick unto Death: who reſcu'd and recover'd me from the Slavery of the Devil, when I was led Captive by him at his will. Shall not a ranſom'd, redeemed Slave, be thankful to his Deliverer? Shall not a miſerable undone Sinner, who is received to Mercy, be thankful for a Pardon? Awake, *O my Soul!* and utter a Song of Praiſe to him, * *who forgiveth all thine Iniquities, and healeth all thy Diſeaſes; who redeemeth thy Life* (thy Soul) *from Deſtruction, and crowneth thee with loving-kindneſs, and tender Mercies.*

Hath he made thee Partaker of his own renewed Image and Likeneſs? given thee his Son, his Grace, his Spirit? and taken ſuch a wretched Creature into ſo near a relation to Himſelf; and promiſed to be thy God and Guide, thy Portion and thine Inheritance, thy Friend and thy Phyſician, thy Sun and thy Shield, and thine exceeding great Reward? and ſhall not my Soul ſpeak aloud his Praiſe? Hath he been * *merciful to my unrighteouſneſs, and blotted out my ſins?* Hath he *gathered me with his Arm, and carried me in his Boſom?* Hath he

* *Pſal.* 103. v. 3. * *Iſa.* 43. v. 14.

been my Saviour and Redeemer, adopted me into his Family, and promis'd to make me Bleſſed in his Glory, with the holy Angels? the Curſe being removed, and the Hand-writing againſt me cancell'd, the Price paid, the Breach made up, the Mouth of Juſtice ſtopt, and the condemning Sentence of the Law exchang'd for a gracious Pardon, through the Sacrifice of *my Bleſſed Lord Jeſus?* and ſhall I not praiſe his incomprehenſible Love and Grace?

I likewiſe thank Thee, moſt holy Father, for ſaving me from Guilt and Ruine, when aſſaulted by powerful and dangerous *Temptations*; that by preventing Mercy, or *reſtraining Grace*, thou haſt kept me from many ſcandalous and preſumptuous Crimes. I thank Thee, for making the *Sins* of *Others* a *Warning* and a *Caution* to *Me*, an Argument to Humility, and a Motive to Watchfulneſs; for preſerving my Judgment from many Errors and Deluſions, by which others are ſeduced; for enabling me to improve any Opportunities of doing Good, and making me in any thing uſeful to Others: yea, I thank thee for all thy Mercies to *other Chriſtians*; for all the Gifts and Graces and uſefulneſs of any of thy Servants, wherein, as a Member of the ſame Body, I deſire to rejoyce; for any

Support

Support and Comfort to me, or any of them, under honourable Sufferings for thy Names sake.

I desire unfeignedly to bless Thee, for any Succour, Relief and Victory, with respect to the Snares and Buffetings of *Satan*, and the vilest of his *Temptations*. When he hath tempted me to Apostacy, and Infidelity in Speculation and Practice; to question the Truth of the Holy Scriptures, and the Life to come; to doubt of the foundations of the Christian Faith, or to despair of the Mercy of God, and give up the Reins to sensual Lusts; or to draw me from God, by the love of the World, and the praise of Men, by Evil Company, Intemperance, secret Wickedness, *&c.*

I Bless Thee with my whole Soul, for calling me back from any of my *Wanderings*, and by infinite Goodness recovering me after great *Falls*, enabling me to return when I had gone astray, and seek thy forfeited favour, that thou mayst *heal my Backslidings*; giving me, in order to it, a deep sense of my own Sin, and of thy Sovereign Grace; leading me to a Saviour, whose Blood cleanseth from all sin, when my guilty defiled Soul so much needed its pardoning and cleansing Virtue; awakening me to make holy *Vows*, and calling up-

on me by thy Word, and Spirit, and Providence, to perform them.

I Bleſs Thee, who haſt guided my feet into the *way of peace*, when by the terrors of an acculing *Conſcience*, and the ſenſe of unpardon'd Sin, and the apprehenſions of thy deſerved Wrath, I was ready to *deſpair*: that though thou didſt moſt juſtly hide thy Face at any time, it was but for a little while; but didſt ſeaſonably, and in Mercy, return, to wipe off my Tears, *reſtore the Joy of thy Salvation*, and chace away the clouds and darkneſs on my Spirit, by the reviving preſence of thy own. Thou who art the *Author*, wilt be the *Finiſher of my Faith*; and therefore, though thou haſt viſited mine Iniquities with a Fatherly Rod, yet *thy loving-kindneſs thou haſt not taken from me, or ſuffer'd thy faithfulneſs to fail*, or *thy Covenant of Peace to be removed*; but haſt refreſhed me with *hidden Manna*, after great Perplexities, ſaying unto my Soul, *I am God, even thy God*; making me to hear thy Voice, which was ſweet, and to taſte thy *Love*, which is better than Wine; enabling me to ſay with thine Apoſtle *Thomas*, *My Lord, and my God*; and to have any Communion with thee ſince, in publick or private Duties.

For

For all these *innumerable Mercies* I desire to praise Thee, which yet are but in order to *greater*, to *Everlasting Kindness in Heaven.* These are but the taste and *Earnest* of what thou wilt bestow hereafter. *O how great is his Goodness, that he hath laid up for those that fear him? And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is even in Thee.* I thank thee, who hast thus put it into my Heart, to render thee solemn Praise, and once more to renew my Covenant with Thee.

I will magnifie the Lord, and my Spirit shall rejoyce in God my Saviour. Return unto thy rest, O my Soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with me. While (a) *I live I will praise thee, and sing Praises unto my God, while I have a Being. O come, and behold the Works of the Lord, what he hath done for my Soul! The Lord liveth.* (b) *Blessed be my Rock, and let the God of my Salvation be exalted. Let my Heart be glad, and my Glory rejoyce, for the Lord is not asham'd to be called my God. Thanks be to God, who hath caused me to triumph in Christ Jesus. Sing unto the Lord, O ye his Saints, and give thanks at the remembrance of his Holiness!* (c) *I cried unto Thee, and thou hast healed, and sav'd me: I will give thanks to Thee for ever.* (d) *I will shew forth thy lo-*

(a) *Psal.* 104. 33. (b) *Psal.* 18. 46. (c) *Psal.* 30. (d) *Psal.* 119. 62.

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ving-kindneſs in the morning, and thy faithfulneſs every night: For the Lord is Good, his Mercy is Everlaſting, and his Truth endures throughout all Generations. O enter into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and his Courts with Praiſe: be thankful unto him, and bleſs his Name. Bleſs the Lord, all ye his Works, in all places of his Dominions: Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul.

Let me add for a *Concluſion*, That the particular Deliverances, Supports, and Conſolations, which at any time God hath given in Caſes of great Exigence, or in anſwer to importunate Prayer, ought never to be forgotten. Many experienc'd Chriſtians have been wont to *write down* ſuch remarkable Appearances of God for them, with the particular Circumſtances that did recommend and enhance the Mercy, (whether Spiritual or Temporal) as an Encouragement to truſt in God in future Difficulties; and have afterwards found the Comfort and Advantage of being able to have recourſe to ſuch Papers. This Practice I recommend as what hath been uſeful and conſolatory to divers Chriſtians, for many years afterwards; and to ſome others, of their more intimate Friends, to whom they might without vanity be imparted. What *Experiences* might be record-

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ed of ſignal Returns to Prayer, and ſeaſonable Manifeſtations of the Truth, and Goodneſs, and Wiſdom of God, if all the *Inſtances* thereof were duly recollected and preſerv'd! And how ſweet and pleaſant would the Work of Prayer and Praiſe then be! With what rejoycing and delight ſhould we ſet about it, and live in it, if the conſtraining Goodneſs and Love of God, and a thankful ſenſe of his unſpeakable Mercies, did bring us to him, and indite and animate every word! What Support, and Comfort, and probable Hopes (at leaſt) of the ſpecial Love of God, might we derive from the various paſſages of his Compaſſion and Kindneſs! And hereby we may be able more heartily to give him thanks for Pardon, Sanctification, and Adoption, which we commonly mention with too much doubt and fear.

It may likewiſe be adviſable to examine and record the Workings of *your own Spirit*, under ſuch Diſpenſations: what thoughts you then had of God? what Acts of Faith, Love, Thankfulneſs, you did then manifeſt? what Evidences of God's Favour, and what diſcovery of your own Sincerity, you have had at ſuch times? when, and how and by what means you were cur'd of your uncomfortable Unbelief, and rais'd

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from your Deſpondency? what Promiſes you had recourſe to for relief? what Conſiderations were moſt helpful to you? what frame of Spirit you kept up in Prayer, before and after? what Reſolutions and Engagements you made to God, to love, and and truſt, and praiſe, and ſerve him, and give up all to his diſpoſe for the future? and what conſequent Obligation may be inferr'd from thence, to acquieſce in the Will of God, and reſign our ſelves entirely to Him, ſaying, *This God is our God for ever and ever, and He will be our Guide unto Death.*

THE END.

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